DIRECTING BILLY SHAW

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DIRECTING BILLY SHAW

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CHAPTER I

SEPARATION OF THE PLAYWRIGHT FROM THE THEATER PROCESS

In the beginning, theatre was formless, existing only in the imaginations of those who longed to express their innate need to objectify their innermost thoughts, dreams, and hopes. In the beginning the light of the night fire would illuminate the faces of those who surrounded the actor and who interacted emotionally with the spectacle being presented and the message of the gods who transmitted their pleasure through the actor. The flickering of the fire would create a staccato effect on the movements of the actor and this effect would intensify the passion being presented. The movements of the actor would quicken and the increased speed would cause the audience to moan in excitement or perhaps sing to the heavens. The “play” would increase in frenzy until the actor and the audience would collapse in exhaustion and emotional release many hours later. It’s possible that the actor was recreating a moment of a hunt or the honor of a conquest or the adulation of a deity and the audience would wish this to be its own experience. This recreation satisfied a basic need deep in the hearts of the audience resulting in catharsis.

It is true that this scene is fantasy. No one knows when the first act of theatre occurred. These origins are certainly to be shrouded in mystery forever. All we have is fantasy and this is why theatre, even today, satisfies a need we as humans have. We need to find common ground with our fellow human beings. We need to expand our consciousness to envelop the experience of those around us and make their experience ours. Therefore, we have theatre.
We will never know the events of millennia ago; however, all of this is plausible as we can examine the events of today. As Schechner writes, “billions of human beings encounter ritual directly through religion. Evidence of religious rituals dates back to the earliest periods of human history, and even to pre-history” (45). Even today stories of great feats and tales of the deeds of gods are being told. “Story telling is . . . cited as an important source of theatre. From the Ivory Coast to the Kalahari Desert, African storytellers impersonate character and concretize detail to a remarkable extent” (Brown 96). We have tales of frenzied dances among the native peoples of the Americas that were performed to influence the gods. Even ghost stories traditionally told around campfires are indeed theatre.

It is not a great leap to move our imagination from a single actor to multiple actors even in the most primitive of societies. For “[c]haracter interaction and dialogue can occur when the story-teller, remaining on the margins of the action like some master of ceremonies, elicits information from characters, guiding both spectators and actors through developing improvisation” (Brown 96-97). The master of ceremonies in this case is much like a director who manipulates the script and the actors and the setting and the audience to create magic. In his Companion to David Mamet, Christopher Bigsby states that, “He [David Mamet] is hardly unaware . . . that the writer is also an actor, a confidence trickster who deploys this power to capture the attention and acquiescence of those who watch” (31). Or he could be a puppeteer who mesmerizes his audience with a story that captures them totally. In these cases, the writer and the actor, who are the same
person, are undoubtedly also functioning as the director. Theatre (at least at these early stages), incorporated into one role the functions of actor, director, and playwright. This melding of the roles of actor, director, and playwright is totally different than the current practice of having different people execute these roles. In fact, it appears that in some cases, directors prefer that playwrights not even be in attendance for rehearsals. Jane Anderson feels that, “There’s a very good reason why writers should be barred from the room: By the time playwrights get to rehearsal we’re at a completely different stage in the process from the actors and the director. We’ve already made our way through the terror of creating something out of nothing” (1). Further, as David Greenspan noted, “When the writer is in the audience, it is harder for the actor because the actor is worried about what the writer thinks” (Dramatist Guild). Greenspan went on by recounting a meeting he had with a young German director regarding the cutting of his play. “I said, ‘How do you work with a playwright?’ He said, ‘Oh, we do not like to have the playwright in rehearsals. We find it very disturbing to the work of the artists’” (Stocks 35). A vivid example of this last point was written by Deidre Bair as she paints a picture of Samuel Beckett entering a theater where a rehearsal of his play Not I was taking place:

As soon as he arrived at the Royal Court Theater there were problems. Beckett walked into the first rehearsal and immediately inspired a barely veiled animosity in almost everyone connected with the production because he knew every line and had definite ideas about vocal shading, nuance, gesture, and all technical aspects of the production (627).
It is unfortunate that the playwright has been separated from the rehearsal process.

However, it must be kept in mind that when theatre began, playwrights were a vital part of the production as the playwright not only created the script, but was often the director, actor, and producer. As Vera Roberts pointed out:

> Scratch almost any successful playwright and you will reveal underneath an individual who has involved himself with the theatrical art *as a whole*. Playwriting is not a ‘closet’ activity. No doubt the reason we currently bemoan our present lack of ‘great plays’ is that the present century has too often excluded playwrights from the theatre, and sent them off to ‘write’ somewhere else, accepting their solitary accomplishments when they had theatrical possibilities but delegating their production to other theatre artists (373).

If we take Ms. Roberts’ words at face value, it appears that she laments the separation of the playwright from the theater. Charles Busch seems to feel the same way when he says, “I think it’s helpful when you’re an actor/writer writing for actors. We know the rhythms and we know an actor’s language. I think we have that in our favor” (Stocks 34). If removing the playwright from the presentation process and pigeonholing him/her so completely is a negative development, then why has it occurred? When were playwrights barred from the production of their plays? As Brockett points out, “In the contemporary theatre, the playwright is usually the theatre artist most removed from the process of play production” (*The Essential Theatre* 300). Although there are exceptions (and have been throughout theatre history), today it appears that generally the director is not the playwright and is esteemed more than the playwright. Once again, the question remains – why has this happened and when did this separation begin?
If history is examined, it becomes apparent that as audiences demanded more and more spectacle in their theater; it became more and more difficult for one individual to perform all of the roles in the production. Therefore, there was specialization in the various roles required by theatre. A director took a playwright’s words and interpreted them so that he could direct an actor who then took the playwright’s words and spoke them to an audience. No longer was a playwright involved with his play to the extent that he had been during Greek theater or even during the theater of Shakespeare. He has become divorced from the process in those productions which still rely on spectacle. However, there does seem to be a movement in theater in which the playwright is more intimately involved in the plays he has written. He is beginning to take on the role of director as well as that of playwright. There are also those playwrights who act in their own plays. Playwrights are once again becoming a part of the whole process. This can only be to the benefit of theater as a whole for only when a person is completely immersed in a field of endeavor can he understand completely what is necessary for any role in the process to be successful.
What is it that causes a playwright to create his work? That is to say, why does the playwright take the blank paper which lies before him and transform this emptiness into something that is real; something that transforms the experience of the playwright from an intangible nothingness into something that others can experience with him?

Matthew Weinberg tries to explain this when he writes:

> At the heart of human experience lies an essential yearning for self-definition and self-understanding. Developing a conception of who we are, for what purpose we exist, and how we should live our lives is a basic impulse of human consciousness. The direction of human affairs is inextricably connected to the evolution of our identity. For it is from our identity that intention, action, and social development flow. Identity determines how we see ourselves and conceive our position in the world, how others see or classify us, and how we choose to engage with those around us (1).

To take this thinking one step further, an examination of all theater from the very beginning tends to give the examiner the sense that theater is truly a constant search for personal identity. It may very well be that all of those who are a part of theater are engaged in a search for their own identity. It is through this search for personal identity
in the playwright, the actor, the director, and, of course, the audience member that makes all of it matter. Weinberg feels that our identity influences the way in which we choose to engage with those around us and if we extrapolate, the way in which we interact with theater. If the audience member can’t see at least a piece of themselves in the action on stage, it is likely that the audience member wouldn’t be able to make sense of the theater which is being played in front of him or her.

A question at this point arises, however, regarding what exactly this personal identity entails. Is this search a more general impulse that is intrinsic in members of the human race and is therefore similar in all humans or is it more cultural? Is it necessary that there be experiences to which anyone who is of a culture can relate and grasp the very human experience which is occurring on the stage before them or are the impulses being acted on stage universal across cultures? Can a playwright speak to audiences across decades, centuries, even millennia? Shakespeare certainly does even after 500 years. And some of the Greek masters even after over two thousand. But what of those playwrights whose names aren’t even remembered; whose plays may likely exist in print, but certainly are not in production? Can it be that their plays are poorly written or can it be that these plays simply aren’t relevant any longer because rather than speaking to humanity, they spoke only to the culture which existed when they wrote? Anne Bogart writes in her book *A Director Prepares*, “What is culture? I believe culture is shared experience. And it is constantly shifting” (29). If it is constantly shifting, how can Shakespeare continue to be relevant? How would an author know if his play is relevant?
David Mamet answers this when he writes, “It’s written in the Koran: The Prophet leaves two teachers, a speaking teacher and a silent one. The speaking teacher is the Koran, and the silent one is death. Similarly, the dramatist has two teachers: the speaking one is the audience” (Theatre 104).

The audience is the speaking teacher. Only through their reaction can a dramatist truly know if the play is successful (and relevant). Obviously a playwright can and will never know if his play will stand the test of time. Therefore, the only test that a playwright can examine is what is happening right now. “[T]he dramatist may learn from the only school where he can learn: in the back of the house, watching the paying audience watch his play (Mamet Theatre 126). And not only that, but it is true that “A play attains its finished form only in performance upon the stage” (Cohen 335). It is that moment that a playwright can clearly know whether his play has succeeded.

I suppose this is what motivated me to attempt to write a play and see the play I had written performed on stage in front of an audience. It was the only way I could discover if what I had written was any good. The only real test of a play is does it play well? Reading a play can only test the product to a certain point. When Charles Busch was asked if it has ever been helpful for someone else to read his work, his response was “Never” (Dramatist Guild). That is to say, a play is not a novel, it is not a poem, it is not even an essay – it needs to be placed into the hands of actors and played upon a stage. David Mamet writes, “Stagecraft can be learned only on stage in front of a paying audience. For as in most things it is the blunt trauma of failure that is the necessary spur
to knowledge” (*Theatre* 81). He also writes, “The audience will teach the writer, as its judgment, moment by moment, is the only test” (*Theatre* 105).

Originally, the play *Billy Shaw* was written to satisfy a course requirement (and to satisfy something that I can only describe as an innate need to create). The problem, however, was that as time went on, the play began to take on a life of its own. I was afraid that it was getting away from me and that I had no control over what it was trying to say. When this occurred, I experienced trepidation about not completely understanding my own work or my own process. Fortunately, for my peace of mind, I discovered something that David Mamet had written which told me that he, at least, would understand:

> The two hardest parts of the writing of drama are (1) discarding all the notes and sketches, and writing ‘at rise’ and (2) accepting the resulting draft and committing oneself to work on that, rather than bemoaning or exploring (which are the same) the difference between that draft and the (actually nonexistent) ideal foreseen version of the play” (*Theatre* 41).

Further, I heard Charles Busch say something that I suppose I needed to hear. He said, “When writing plays, I play all of the parts and this helped put the play together” (Dramatist Guild). I also discovered something that Maria Irene Fornes wrote:

> The play writes itself. The first draft writes itself anyway. Then I look at it and I find out what is in it. I find out where I have overextended it and what things need to be cut. I see where I have not found the scene. I see
what I have to do for this character to exist fully. Then I rewrite. And, of course, in the rewrite there is a great deal of thought and sober analysis (Robinson 214).

Not only that, my fear that I was going too far in a sense was eased when I read Terry John Converse’s words:

Breaking habitual ways of doing things is perhaps the best way of bringing about creative ideas. Heading into the unknown, old habits may not work because they tend to inhibit creativity and change. By breaking away from the habitual and the ordinary, in what is usually referred to as ‘breaking the set,’ there is the possibility of inventing a new pattern. The idea of breaking set is suddenly to fracture the routine consciousness that puts your power of observation to sleep. Too often we go through life on automatic pilot where we become habitually fixed in our ways of seeing, and our expectation of how things are supposed to be replaces our seeing” (13).

This “breaking the set” places a tremendous burden upon the playwright. Everything depends upon what he has created. Not only does he have to find something that is beyond the pale and to create something the actor can develop, but it is also incumbent upon him to create something the audience finds interesting. As David Mamet points out, “In truth, then, one might reason that the only purpose of drama is to entertain the
audience. And one would be correct” (*Theatre* 126). Ross Wetzsteon quoted Maria Irene Fornes when he wrote,

> You have to open yourself up to the world beneath your ideas. You don’t tell the characters what to say or do, you listen to what they tell you. They shouldn’t speak for my benefit but from their own needs. It’s their voices, not mine, that speak the mind of the play. Any conceptual thinking, any premeditation on my part, is just manipulation (Robinson 28-29).

I began to realize that my intention was to have living people play the parts I was writing and that, at times, the lines were stuffy and that what I thought was a lack of control over the play was simply an understanding of that fact. This could be corrected by creating characters to whom the audience could identify and were truly human.

The characters now became alive. From that moment on, *Billy Shaw* was mine again.

However, when I began to write the play, I knew none of these things. All I can remember is the excitement that I felt when I started the project. I sincerely had no idea what was going to be on any of the pages. However, I knew that if the play was to be about a fantasy of mine, it had to involve two things: baseball and my son. From that point, I had no idea what was going to happen. David Mamet refers to the audience as the speaking teacher in playwriting. But then he examines the other half of the teacher when he states “(t)he silent teacher is the empty page” (*Theatre* 107). It wasn’t until I
began to write the play that I could have ever understood what he was trying to say.

Once I faced the daunting mission of turning the blank page into something that could be presented on the stage, I understood the metaphor of the blank page being equated with death. Not succeeding would have been horrible beyond all measure. It became extremely important to me to succeed. The play was there, lurking in my subconscious somewhere. My muse held it in her hands just waiting for me to tap into the play that had been waiting unborn all these years. I spent every free moment typing the play on my laptop knowing that it would eventually emerge.

Once the decision had been made that the play was going to be presented to an audience, the process was no longer just to amuse me and to satisfy a class requirement, but now it had to entertain an audience. Now I had to learn how to be a playwright. I knew when. But how? Where? I was prepared to be daunted, however, for Mamet wrote of his term as a teacher of playwriting at Yale, “My year-end analysis was that the rules for playwriting were few and self-evident, and to those who did not find them self-evident, that they would remain forever incomprehensible” (Theatre 115). In essence, he was trying to say that playwriting could not be learned, that it had to be instinctual and only fine-tuning could be learned through experience. However, I was not willing to hand the bejeweled glove back. I was going to persevere.

After all of this doubt and self-recrimination, came the challenge. How was the play going to be presented in a way that was going to entertain an audience in the way it entertained me? As I began to let other people read Billy Shaw, I discovered that other
readers had some difficulty with the “baseball” aspect of the play. I have been enthralled by baseball since childhood. Others, I have come to realize, are not quite as passionate. This was a dilemma. As long as the play was essentially just a bit of amusement for me, the intensity and preciseness of the baseball lingo during the play was a nonissue. But now Billy Shaw was going to come out of his shell and become as real as any character in a drama could become. Maria Irene Fornes approached my conundrum when she writes, “What I want language to be is an expression of the characters, but a very careful expression so that they or the words don’t get carried away and become their own expression” (Robinson 240). It seemed as though she felt that intense baseball lingo was necessary for a play such as Billy Shaw on one hand and too much on the other. My feelings that the play was getting away from me during the writing process might have been just that – my involvement with trying to deliver a true experience was a bit over the top. But then, in a streaming video roundtable sponsored by the Dramatist Guild, I heard Charles Busch say, “There is a fine line between too much and not enough” (Dramatist Guild). And I read Anne Bogart’s words when she wrote, “Theatre is about memory; it is an act of memory and description” (39). Tony Kushner remembered an interview that Maria Irene Fornes gave when she says, “The play is yours, only you can fix, only you will defend it” (Robinson 131). The play was mine, the decision of whether to keep the baseball lingo was mine, and there was no one who could realistically second-guess any decision I made. Not only that, but the play was largely about my memories and these memories would be degraded in a sense if I let the language be less than it was. Further,
I felt the characters could not stand without baseball being the language of the play. I made the decision to leave the language alone. As Mamet had already told me, the audience would tell me if the language was effective or not.

At this point, I felt I needed to go over the play to try and make sure that it was ready for a cast. Until it was ready for a cast, I felt that I really needed to work with rewriting. I found that this wasn’t so unusual as Marc Robinson reported that “In (Maria Irene) Fornes’ ideal world, revision would go on forever: her understanding of her characters deepens with every new approach” (Robinson 20). Therefore, in Forne’s ideal world, revision occurs during the writing of the play, before the beginning of rehearsal, during rehearsal, and potentially during the run. In my reading, I also found that:

[George Bernard] Shaw frequently cut and changed his plays to shorten running time to assist an actor who could not adequately deliver the lines, to improve the play. On some occasions, Shaw restored cut passages to the printed editions of his plays. We may conclude that in such cases the deletions were made because of the requirements of a particular production” (Dukore 44).

I was also aware that the play’s wording likely wasn’t perfect because it was essentially in the first draft and, in addition, it was a first play. Not only did I need to prepare the script for actors, but in addition, I was certain that the actors would tell me where revisions in the script needed to be made simply through the way they would play the scenes. First of all, David Mamet made me realize that the language of the script is of
utmost importance in a play for he wrote, “Here is what I learned in a lifetime of playwriting: It doesn’t matter how you (the actor) say the lines” (True and False 63). He continues by writing, “The ‘work’ you (the actor) do ‘on the script’ will make no difference. That work has already been done by a person with a different job title than yours. That person is the author” (True and False 55). Therefore, it is true that the actors will help me revise a scene by the way they play the scene, but more importantly, it is the way the scene plays for me when I am sitting in the audience. And it had to be me who made the changes, for it was my play. George Bernard Shaw insisted that “All changes and cuts were the prerogatives of the author, who understood the relationship of each line to the total fabric of the play” (Dukore 44). However, on the other side of the coin is the statement by Hunter Bell when he said, “Scripts can be a collaborative process by having actors and actresses read the script and express their opinion” (Dramatist Guild). This seems to indicate that actors should have a hand in the writing of a play. George Bernard Shaw would certainly not have agreed even a little as he referred to “intelligent cutting” as a skilled job which “should be done by the author, if available, or if not, by a qualified playwright, not by a player, nor by the callboy” (Dukore 39). By comparing the ability of actors to work at rewriting a script to the ability of callboys, it is apparent the attitude Shaw had toward anyone other than a writer fooling with text. However, David Mamet, in a sense, seems to find his opinion in this matter fall somewhere in between. He doesn’t let his actors rewrite the script, but “when Mamet is in rehearsal, he listens for the lines the actors have trouble remembering – the fault he feels lies not with the actors but
with the text, which must be a-rhythmic” (Nadel 102). Dael Orlandersmith addresses this issue in somewhat of a different manner when she states, “I hear music all of the time when I’m writing” (Dramatist Guild). This puts a playwright in quite a quandary, especially when it is his first play and he doesn’t have the experience of having a play he has written to fall back upon. Orlandersmith’s observation seems to fit with Mamet’s in that there must be a rhythm to the writing or it will be nearly impossible for a director to develop the proper pace to keep the play interesting. And keeping Shaw’s thoughts in mind, it is only the playwright who can accomplish such a feat.

My goal in examining the playwrights who have filled this chapter was to discover what other playwrights who also directed their own plays had to teach me. I found that a constant searching for personal identity within the characters who populate the stage was essential. But even more than that, it was important these characters have the ability to speak to the members of the audience. Further, however, I have learned that this message has to be delivered in a way that is interesting. It needs to be delivered not only with interesting action, but also with interesting words. The words need to speak to the members of the audience in a way they can grasp the action. However, the words also need to be true to the play. In addition, the words must be written in a way that the actors can deliver them in a manner that is true to them and they can deliver them faithfully without histrionics. I have also learned that the actors will tell me what revisions need to be made, but not through their comments, but through their acting and
what I see on stage. I feel that I have addressed all of these issues and the play is now ready for rehearsal.
CHAPTER III
DIRECTING BILLY SHAW

What makes theater? On the one hand Peter Brook wrote, “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged” (Brook 9). However, David Mamet appears to disagree for “(David) Mamet is unambivalent about what makes a successful play. It is a work that is simple, direct, and clear and follows a set of well-defined steps: drafting, cutting, building to a climax, leaving out exposition and always progressing toward the simple goal of the protagonist which is often expressed in constant awareness of the through-line by the actor” (Nadel 9).

Samuel Beckett looks at the issue in a different way. “For Beckett, the director was the least important person during the writing of the play, in part because he always visualized himself the director, and also because his most important consideration was the audience” (Bair 551).

Here it appears that there are three different approaches to theater. Peter Brook seems to find the actions of the actor as being the most important toward the creation of theater. For David Mamet, it appears that he finds the contribution of the playwright to be of the first and foremost importance. And for Beckett, it was entertaining the audience which was of the greatest consideration. Something which is striking in the statements of all three is the absence (or diminished role) of the director. And so, what is the role of the director in an act of theater? Not only that – what is theater?
Simply because of the difference in opinion regarding theater, it is apparent that the answer isn’t perfectly clear. There are those who feel that theater is created in the writing. There are those who seem to feel it is in the interpretation of themes of the text. And finally there are those who feel that it is in the interpretation of the action that the text suggests. But the fact that directing has become an essential piece of theatre ever since the separation of functions in the days of the Greeks can’t be ignored. Not only that, the function a director performs in the development of a production has become fluid as well. Although the actor is possibly the most well-known member of the fraternity (or sorority) of theater, the roles of the playwright and the director are just as essential in modern theater. However, what happens when these roles blur as they did in very early Greek theater?

Paul Kozelka in his book *Directing* catalogues a series of types of directors: First is the director who is not prepared, either because of heavy class work and committee obligations or because he does not know what preparation is needed. He comes to rehearsal and keeps his head in the playbook, literally following every suggestion offered in the script. He does not create anything new or interpret the script in theatrical terms. He sits at the edge of the stage and acts as a prompter and traffic cop. He is of little help to the actors, and he betrays his obligation to the audience.

Second comes the director who is over-prepared. He knows the play so well, is in such a hurry, and is so positive in his ideas that he acts
out every role and insists that he be imitated. This method may be necessary with an occasional actor, but surely the whole cast cannot be unsuited to the material. If such a thing happens, the play was chosen without regard to the available actors. The imitation method is sometimes used by famous directors, but it leads to a performance without spark or spontaneity. Every actor acts like every other one because each is imitating the director. This autocratic system gives some directors a false sense of power, but it takes all the value and pleasure out of . . . theater.

Third is the specialist who is superb at one type of production: tragedy, melodrama, farce, comedy, serious play, or musical. He tends to select the same kind of play each season and justifies his choice by saying it is ‘what the audience wants.’

Last is the generalist who is able to analyze all types of plays, who can discover the intentions of the author whoever he may be, who can communicate with actors, who knows theatre techniques and understands the needs of audiences. Ideally, he knows what is happening in the other arts and in daily life so that his productions are contemporary in every sense. However, he does not bludgeon his audience with accents that overemphasize relevancy for today in the classics. He lets audiences discover parallels for themselves. He chooses plays for his available actors and for the artistic progress of his own career. In short, [he] is an
alert person, a sensitive teacher, and an imaginative, creative theatrician (31-32).

It appears obvious that Mr. Kozelka prefers the last person he delineates in his list. This is a type of person for whom it is apparent that theater is a passion rather than a chore. The first type of director seems to be willing to be led by those who give him an opportunity to be led. He doesn’t seem to have the time or inclination to examine a script and “direct” the process. The second seems to be more impressed with how smart he or she is and is more interested in making sure that everyone knows what a wonderful director he or she is rather than in directing a play. The third would not seem to be much different than the second in that he or she is setting himself or herself up to be more intelligent than anyone else in the theater process. In all three cases, it seems like the individual being described is somewhat inflexible. Although I have doubts that there is anyone who would fit one of these director types perfectly, these descriptions do delineate behaviors into which it would be all too easy to fall at times if a director wasn’t taking care not to do so. We all have stresses in our lives which distract us and we do need to concentrate on the goal of being the best we can. This leads to the “generalist” of whom Mr. Kozelka writes. This is an ideal person who never seems to stray from the straight and narrow. I do aspire to be that sort of director. I just have to keep in mind at all times the characteristics which make up such a person.
The “generalist” also appears to possess characteristics which are not directly stated. For an example, in a streaming video roundtable, David Greenspan seems to be one of the few who blur the distinction between playwright and actor as he says, “I always act in my own plays” (Dramatist Guild 11/22/11). Although he made no mention of actually directing his plays, he does seem to be one those who would fall into the “generalist” category as he will certainly be able to “communicate with actors,” be familiar with “theatre techniques,” and have a definite understanding of the “needs of audiences.” However, it does make you wonder what sort of effect this arrangement has on the director (and perhaps the other actors). It does seem, though, that those playwrights who direct their own plays are more common than those individuals who only act in the plays they have written, but even then they seem to take a more diverse view of what a director actually does when directing his or her actors. “‘What I ask actors to do is never the obvious thing,’ Maria Irene Fornes says, ‘so I feel I have to explain to them why they are doing it’” (Robinson 30). However, Fornes goes one step further when she says, “I never saw any difference between writing and directing” (Robinson 235). This is obviously a complete merging of the roles of playwriting and directing. David Mamet makes it clearer, though, when he writes, “I think directing is much the same as playwriting: It’s telling a story. In writing one uses words. In directing, one uses people who are using words” (Mamet Theatre 151). He continues with the same thought, which clarifies his thinking, when he writes, “But as a director, I am not interpreting my work. I’m merely staging it” (Mamet Theatre 151). In the words
of Stanislavsky: “any director who has to do something interesting with the text does not understand the text’’ (Mamet Theatre 151). Mamet seems to firmly believe this for as David Nadel reports, “‘Good drama,’ he [Mamet] believes, ‘has no stage direction’” (2). All of these individuals would seem to fall into the category of Mr. Kozelka’s “generalist.”

Nevertheless, Mamet’s thoughts gave me pause. I had written the text and my thought was simply “who would be better prepared to interpret the text than me.” After all, I had written it! I knew how I had seen it staged as I wrote the play. It was almost as if I were a shade of George Bernard Shaw. In a biography of Shaw it was written, “Shaw the author planned the blocking and stage business when he prepared the play for the printer. Shaw the director refined the author’s blocking and stage business when he prepared the play for production” (Dukore 17). But after some thought, I began to understand Mamet’s view. To me, what he was trying to say wasn’t that much different from Beckett’s or Shaw’s point of view. Nor is it that much different than Stanislavsky’s view. Although I certainly agree with Fornes that the play should be in a stage of constant revision while it is being rehearsed (which could include refining blocking and stage business), the director, regardless of whether he is the playwright or not, is not in the position of interpreting the play. Mamet made this very clear when he wrote, “[t]he better the play, the easier it is to stage. Why? A good play is clear. It is clear who wants what from whom. Knowing this, the director can merely stage the actors such that, scene by scene, their intentions are clear to the audience. Let the actor learn his
lines and open the damn thing” (*Theatre* 131). He makes the same admonishment to the actor when he writes, “The ‘work’ you (the actor) do ‘on the script’ will make no difference. That work has already been done by a person with a different job title than yours. That person is the author. The lines written for you should be said clearly so that the audience can hear and understand them. Any meaning past that supplied by the author will come from your intention toward the person to whom they are said” (*True and False* 55). Therefore, regardless of whether an individual is directing his own play or acting in it, he must constantly be switching hats as the play is being prepared for the stage. When he is wearing the playwright hat, he is revising the text. When he is wearing the directing hat, he is doing his best to interpret the text in a manner that will make sense to the audience. Finally, when he is wearing the actor hat, he is attempting to interpret the role of a character in a way to which other actors can relate.

So, after examining all of these pieces of advice by acclaimed playwrights who have indeed directed their own works, the question still needs to be examined, what is the role of the director? Is he the one who is to be so involved in the production that all revolves around him? Or is he to be simply a facilitator; someone who restricts himself to developing the blocking and lets the actors bounce ideas off of him when necessary? Once again it seems that we are walking a fine line. Being too hands off could lead us in the direction of behaving like the “unprepared” director in Kozelka’s list. Being too hands on could lead us to be either the “over-prepared” director or the “specialist.” However, I believe that letting the actors determine how the scenes will play out won’t
work in this case of Billy Shaw as it might with a more experienced company as the company with whom I’ll be working are high-schoolers and don’t have extensive experience. Further, the play involves a need for a thorough understanding of baseball which some will not have. Therefore, I’m going to have to be more hands on than perhaps the “generalist” would be and be very careful to not fall into difficulties by not being in a hurry and being flexible.

What is the direction I should follow at this point? Do I follow the lead of more experienced directors or do I go off in an entirely different direction that I might not be capable of taking? On a surface level, I don’t see that much difference in the views of Mamet and Beckett as they both appear to want to follow the script first and direct secondly which, of course, makes perfect sense as both often directed plays which they had written. However, in actual practice, it appears that Beckett wanted a firmer hand in his productions as “he [Beckett] wrote detailed notes to himself on the working script, interpreting each movement with mathematical precision, explaining for his own benefit and the benefit of others, how he wanted each word to be spoken and what technical procedures should accompany the actor’s movements” (Bair 591). Could Beckett be an “over-prepared” director? When Maria Irene Fornes is read, though, she seems to contradict herself. She stated that she felt the need to explain to the actors in one of her plays why they were performing a particular action which would seem to fall into the trap of being “overprepared.” But as Susan Cole reports when Fornes was examining a reality which underlies social behavior, “[t]his ‘deeper reality’ is not always accessible even to
the playwright, however. In a disclaimer characteristic of many writers of fiction, Fornes says to an actor during the rehearsal of *Abbington Square*: ‘The characters know what they’re doing, but I don’t.’ As director of her own play, Fornes seems at times to discover possibilities in the text unknown to the playwright” (Robinson 154). I personally found this interesting. Maybe the text had taken on a life of its own in a way in which the playwright was unaware until she put her director’s hat on. Or perhaps she is willing to give her actors some leash by letting them discover their own take on the interactions of the characters, but not enough to stray from what she knows is the intent of her play. This seems to be in direct contradiction to what Beckett and Mamet seem to feel (and, of course, from Kozelka’s “generalist). They seem to feel that all is apparent in the text and the text should not be questioned. Or perhaps Fornes’ take on directing is also where Beckett and Mamet are coming from; they are simply stating it in a different way and I’m not quite getting it.

Even though there may be some disagreement among those who write and then direct their own work, there does seem to be almost unanimous agreement among theater people regarding the changing of a playwright’s work and that is that it is never permissible without the playwright’s direct, written consent (dramatistsguild.com). This is founded on several bases. First of all, it is unethical and illegal without the express permission of the playwright (dramatistsguild.com). But secondly, making such changes would almost certainly distort the intent of the playwright which is unconscionable. A play exists *in toto* only in the playwright’s mind and for anyone else to feel they know the
play better than the playwright would be complete arrogance. As Edward Albee wrote, “We have to remember that the playwright is the creative artist. The director and the actors are the interpretive artists. Interpretation does not permit distortion” (Oppenheim 81-82). Further as Xerxes Mehta noted, “(I)t is necessary to add that I have seen no production of [any play] that has been improved by a significant departure from the writer’s wishes” (Oppenheim 183). However, Mehta does question the efficacy of even attempting to model oneself after the playwright as a director or perhaps even an actor. He writes:

Are a writer’s performance intentions knowable? Can Beckett’s own productions of his works be duplicated by other production teams? Was Beckett necessarily the best director of his own plays? I suggest that the answer to each of these questions is no. Even directors with the best will in the world who study a work (and its surrounding literature), who examine tapes of Beckett’s own approaches to it and talk to people who remember what Beckett did in rehearsal, come out at the end knowing little more about bringing it to life than they did when they read the script initially (Oppenheim 183).

It seems as though all of these people are right. The director and the actors do indeed need to let the words of the writer show through to the audience for that is how the story being told will be told. Telling the story is the most important part of theater. Not only that, but the actors must understand that they cannot tell the story by themselves. It
is only through interaction between the actors can the story be truly told. As Brecht wrote, “(T)he learning process [of a play] must be coordinated so that the actor learns as the other actors are learning and develops his character as they are developing theirs. For the smallest social unit is not the single person but two people. In life too we develop together” (Brecht trans. Willett 197). It seems that Brecht is trying to give actors the same concept as Mamet, but using different words that the play is what is important. The actor is merely bringing the script to the audience, not either becoming the script or becoming more important than the script. Brecht warns the actor that:

At no moment must he [the actor] go so far as to be wholly transformed into the character played. The verdict: ‘he didn’t act Lear, he was Lear’ would be an annihilating blow to him. He has just to show the character, or rather he has to do more than just get into it; this does not mean that if he is playing passionate parts he must himself remain cold. It is only that his feelings must not at bottom be those of the character, so that the audience’s may not a bottom be those of the character either. The audience must have complete freedom here (Brecht trans. Willett 193-194).

Mamet’s words were, “Respect for the audience is the foundation of all legitimate actor training – speak up, speak clearly, open yourself out, relax your body, find a simple objective; practice in these goals is practice in respect for the audience, and without respect for the audience, there is no respect for the theater; there is only self-absorption”
(True and False 58-59). It appears that the director has to find the grey area between giving his/her actors artistic license and pulling them back in if they seem to be making their acting more important than the script. Once again, although these directors may seem to wish to have a little bit more control that Kozelka would like for a “generalist” director to have on a production, all of these directors seem to agree that giving audiences credit for intelligence and playing for them is the most important aspect of theatre.

It also appears that a playwright who directs his own play must walk a fine line between being the creative catalyst for theater and the interpretive funnel through which the play must pass before it is presented. The risk he takes if he strays from this path by constantly rewriting is that he will sully the waters in which the play exists. That would be that not only will the actors lose contact with the intent of the play if the playwright is consistently altering the content, but there is the risk that the playwright will lose contact with his own intent. Constantly trying to fine tune the intent of the characters would seem to be counterproductive. Therein lies a difference between directing and playwriting. Playwriting can only be accomplished in solitude when the voices of the characters can ring in the author’s head without the distraction of trying to direct the play at the same time. If the play is being written while it is being rehearsed it is likely to be written by the cast rather than the playwright which then simply becomes a story of them. As Hunter Bell remarked in a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Dramatist Guild when he was discussing this very thing, “We didn’t want [to create] a documentary, we wanted to do a show” (Stocks 31). However, George Bernard Shaw “frequently cut and
changed his plays – to shorten running time to assist an actor who could not adequately deliver the lines, to improve the play. On some occasions, Shaw restored cut passages to the printed editions of his plays. We may conclude that in such cases the deletions were made because of the requirements of a particular production” (Dukore 44). Shaw apparently did not edit his plays after they had been written to change or alter content, but to make them easier to stage for the company he had at hand. After all, “[a]lthough Shaw refused to sanction other people cutting and changing his plays, he often did so himself” (Dukore 39). It seems that Shaw had no desire to make changes in his plays (nor should he have– he was George Bernard Shaw for goodness sake), but a change for efficacy at that moment or for that particular production was something that he was apparently willing to do. For myself, I had anticipated rewriting the script as I saw the students rehearse *Billy Shaw* to clean up any areas which might be confusing (after all, this was a first play. I was a complete novice when it came to playwriting). But once rehearsals began and the play started to take shape, I found it unnecessary. The action flowed almost perfectly. A rewrite seemed to be unnecessary. However, I did find that there was one place where it was necessary to add a scene simply because an actor had to leave stage right and enter stage left almost immediately after his exit, obviously an impossible task. So I simply had a couple of characters further develop the character of Billy Shaw through a conversation which I found was helpful for later in the show and gave the actor who had to exit right time to enter left (Appendix 80-81). Also I had to create a prologue
to be certain that the audience didn’t have gaps in their knowledge of the action on the stage which would hinder their ability to understand the action (Appendix 66-68).

I was very aware during this process of Mamet’s admonition about a play and the development of it on stage. “The great play consists of those words said by the protagonist(s) in an attempt to achieve the one goal, the announcement of which gave rise to the play. For the actor/director to gobble up the play by inserting the funny emotional, idiosyncratic, or interesting ways the actor accomplishes this goal is to undo the work of the playwright” (Theatre 130). The prologue of Billy Shaw did not originally exist. It was added after rehearsals had begun because I felt that the play was missing something (Appendix 66-68). As David Mamet said, “The better the play, the easier it is to stage. Why? A good play is clear. It is clear who wants what from whom. Knowing this, the director can merely stage the actors such that, scene by scene, their intentions are clear to the audience. Let the actor learn his lines and open the damn thing” (Theatre 131). I wanted my play to work the way it was originally written, but in some cases it just wasn’t clear who wanted what from whom. I felt that the play was good the way it was, but it needed a bit more. The relationship between Stephen and Alexis was still a little confusing as was Ezra Perkins’ objection to the relationship. I added the prologue shortly after rehearsals had begun. It seemed to clear up a number of conundrums as well as set the stage for the main characters of Billy and Beth. Other than the scene that was added to give added time to a character to move from stage right to stage left and a few minor rewrites to make the interchanges between characters flow more smoothly, the prologue
was the only rewriting that was done to *Billy Shaw*. Working with the cast was a different matter altogether. I was fortunate in that I had had the opportunity to work with a few of the cast members before and as a result had developed a relationship. What was even more fortunate was that the relationship was positive. However, my previous relationship was not as director and so the relationship did have that small hurdle to overcome. I decided (more because I wanted to be able to add this experience to the thesis than because it was part of my technique) to take a page from George Bernard Shaw’s technique and try to read the script to the cast before beginning rehearsals. Shaw believed that “the author should read the play to the company” so that “the actors learned how the author wished the various parts to be acted” (Dukore 29). Ideally, Shaw would like to have ‘have a dozen rehearsals seated round a table, books in hand, to get the music right before going on stage’” (Dukore 29). When I tried this with the company I had assembled for *Billy Shaw*, I found that it had a negative effect. First of all, the actors were quickly bored with the exercise and secondly, there were those who were actually offended by the very thought that they were unable to deliver the lines adequately without prompting. I abandoned the approach rather quickly.

Nevertheless, Shaw’s insistence that the music of the play be right before the play began rehearsal struck a chord with me. Obviously, it wasn’t that music with instruments and vocal harmonies and so on was necessary, but the words that are being presented to the audience have to have a cadence, almost a symphonic feel to them in that each character needs to add his/her part to the overall experience of the production. I
found that with one exception this is indeed what happened with *Billy Shaw*. Everything flowed magically and my vision of continuous action without breaks between scenes came to life exactly as I had imagined it would. All of this except for one line Beth had. I don’t think it was the actress who was at fault here. The line simply fell flat. I think the problem was that the line was “a-rhythmic” (as Mamet put it). The problem was that when I went back into the script after rehearsal, I couldn’t find the line and of course, I didn’t remember to focus on it during the next rehearsal because I had planned on a number of other projects to complete. And as a result, the line is still there.

During the entire rehearsal process, the actors were wonderful. They gave a tremendous amount of effort to performing the play by being attentive to direction and with rare exception, being present at every rehearsal, even those rehearsals that were held during the summer when school was not in session. I gave as much effort to planning the rehearsals so the actors would not feel as though their time was frittered away as I did to actually working with the actors. I took David Mamet’s advice when he wrote in *True and False*:

What should happen in the rehearsal process? Two things.

1. The play should be blocked
2. The actors should become acquainted with the actions they are going to perform.

What is an action? An action is an attempt to achieve a goal. Let me say it more simply: an action is the attempt to accomplish something.
Obviously then, the chosen goal must be accomplishable. Here is a simple test: anything less capable of being accomplished than ‘open the window’ is not and cannot be an action: (72-73).

The fact that blocking is part of rehearsal should be obvious if attention is paid to the script. And the attention doesn’t even need to overly focused as many times the stage directions will dictate the blocking and when then they don’t, the blocking is likely obvious. However, the second aspect of rehearsal also requires attention and the attention must be more focused. This is likely the most important function of the director. He needs to keep all actions clear and following the intentions of the script. As *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* maintains, an action must:

1. Be capable of being done – [and that would be immediately. A long range plan is not an action in theater.]
2. Be fun to do – [it must be an action the actor wants to perform.]
3. Be specific – [Stanislavsky said, “Generality is the enemy of all art.”]
4. Have its test in the other person – [the other character’s reaction to the action will tell how true it is.]
5. Be not an errand – [the action must be something at which you can fail. An actor cannot fail at an errand.]
6. Cannot presuppose any physical or emotional state – [any action which requires the actor to be in any particular physical or emotional state when
on stage is likely to fail as the actor is probably not in that physical or emotional state.]

7. Cannot be manipulative – [A manipulative action can cause the actor to act in a predetermined way instead of dealing truthfully with what is happening in the other person.]

8. Must have a ‘cap’ – [a cap is the specific thing the actor is looking for that will mean that he/she has succeeded in the action. The actor can tell if he/she is successful by looking at the other actor to see if the action they have embarked upon has ended.]

9. Must be in line with the intentions of the playwright – [Once the actor has determined what the playwright’s intentions are, the actions he/she chooses must be true to those intents.] (Bruder et al 14-18).

Keeping these things in mind, it was up to me, in the role of the director, to remove myself from the role of the playwright, follow these dictums and be certain that every beat and every scene followed an action or actions that would express the intents of this other person, the playwright, for the audience. Daunting. However, if I was to give the actors the ability to express their craft, I had to let go of my preconceived notions of how the actors were going to present the characters whom I had written, brought to life, and let the actors develop the characters in their own way. And as Brecht pointed out, I should develop the characters through interaction. Although, I also had to keep in mind
that the script was a rather narrow pathway through which the actors would wend their way as they developed their characters. As David Mamet wrote in his directives to actors, “Here is what I learned in a lifetime of playwriting: It doesn’t matter how you say the line. What matters is what you mean. What comes from the heart goes to the heart. The rest is funny voices” (True and False 63). It must be kept in mind, though, that the meaning comes entirely from the script for as Mamet points out, “[e]verything you ever feel onstage will be engendered by the scene” (True and False 92). All of this makes sense when you listen to Mamet when he says, “Acting is a physical art. It is close to the study of dance or singing. It is not like the study of mechanical drawing or literature to which academics would reduce it” (True and False 80). Acting, at least in Mamet’s view, is not about interpreting the script, but acting the script. The actor does indeed need to develop an understanding of the interrelationships between the characters in order to understand what is required, but he doesn’t need to interpret the text. “I do not think it is the actor’s job to be interesting. I think that is the job of the script” (Mamet True and False 98). Mamet goes further when he writes, “The preoccupation of today’s actor with character is simply a modern rendition of an age-old preoccupation with performance which is to say, with oneself. It is, in every age, the old lookout of the ham actor” (True and False 109). The actor does not need to do anything other than develop the physical action of the scene or beat in which he finds himself. He cannot place himself above the other actors regardless of his role in the play.
This is a lesson that I realized at this point is of extreme importance for the director. While it true that any theater company is made up of a number of varying individual personality types with likely an equal number of varying egos, the director must find a way to make his company work as a community rather than letting the “star” run things. Most of the time, I have found, the “star” is self-proclaimed and generally wants to run the show because of their self-proclaimed exceptional ability rather than working with the show to make it the best possible product for the audience. Further, sometimes it is the script which leads a director in this direction as the script demands a “star” because there is a lead character. Again, daunting. How can anyone prevent this circumstance from not only ruining a show, but also ruining a company. Brecht, however, offers a solution:

Here we can learn something for our own theatres’ deplorable habit of letting the dominant actor, the star, ‘come to the front’ by getting all the other actors to work for him: he makes his character terrible or wise by forcing his partners to make theirs terrified or attentive. Even if only to secure this advantage for all, and this to help the story, the actors should sometimes swap roles with their partners during rehearsal, so that the characters can get what they need from one another. But it is also good for the actors when they see their characters copied or portrayed in another form. If the part is played by someone of the opposite sex, the sex of the character will be more clearly brought out; if it is played by a comedian
whether comically or tragically, it will gain fresh aspects. By helping to
develop the parts that correspond to his own, or at any rate standing in for
other players, the actor strengthens the all-decisive social standpoint from
which he has to present his character. The master is only the sort of
master his servant lets him be, etc. (Willet 197).

It is unlikely that the sort of difficulty that Brecht has seen will come to the fore
with *Billy Shaw* as it is more of an ensemble piece and the company which has been
assembled isn’t inclined to behave that way. But, using his ideas could very well help
bring out salient points of each character. And, of course, this is something to be kept in
mind for the future. However, care should be taken to be certain that actors don’t become
so self-involved that they somehow think that theater is for them, and them alone. David
Mamet seems to feel that being cognizant of this fact is simply a matter of respect.

Respect for the audience is the function of all actor training – speak up,
speak clearly, open yourself out, relax your body, find a simple objective;
practice in these goal is practice in respect for the audience, and, without
respect for the audience, there is no respect for the theatre; there is only

One idea that I had when I began to write this play was rather than change sets as
the action moves from scene to scene, simply have all of the sets on stage simultaneously.
Not only that, but rather than have actors move onto the set as the scene begins to unfold,
have certain characters not leave the stage after the scene in which they were acting
ended, but simply stay in the acting area in which they had just finished acting. When the entire idea of the play was just a theory (that being when the play was only being written to satisfy an assignment for a class), it didn’t really matter if there were any drawbacks to this idea as it was an intellectual exercise. Just a bit of fun. But now the play was going to be presented on the stage and any drawback that raised its ugly head was going to be a problem. One such drawback was simply logistics. Billy had to exit stage right and enter stage left simultaneously. For apparent reasons, this couldn’t happen. The problem was easily fixed by writing a scene during which Pop and Jimmy have a conversation about Billy while the actor who was playing Billy was traversing the area backstage from one side of the stage to the other. However, there was another problem. This was that there were actors who were not in the active scene moving and diverting the audience’s attention away from the actors who were carrying the action of the play. I had wanted the actors in “non-active” sets doing something while the play was being carried on another part of the stage and my plan to not let these characters grab attention during this was to simply dim the lighting on that part of the stage so that the actor would be moving in a sort of twilight. But, in actual practice, it never got that dark in the “non-active” areas and the moving actors were a problem. I had to search for a solution. The solution was that this was not a novel problem. It was the reporting that Susan Letzler Cole gave regarding a rehearsal session that Maria Irene Fornes was directing that gave me the solution to my dilemma:
Sitting quietly is as difficult on the stage as elsewhere. Often it is simply a practical necessity, especially in ensemble acting. For example, an actress, having been instructed to sit on a bench until the next pause in the action, repeatedly asks the director “Irene, what am I doing on the bench?” The jokes that surround this incident range from one actor’s mock Stanislavski reply, “You’re acting, baby. Never forget that,” to the remark of another that in sitting on the bench the actress is not really working and that perhaps she ought to be building the bench. Fornes, says with a smile, “There’s something about movement that attracts the eye. I don’t know why” (Robinson142-143).

Shaw added to this as Dukore reports:

He (Shaw) advised the director, ‘Never have a moment of silence on the stage except as an intentional stage effect. The play must not stop while an actor is sitting down or getting up or walking off of the stage. The last word of an exit speech must get the actor off the stage. He must sit on a word and rise on a word; if he has to make a movement, he must move as he speaks and not before or after; and the cues must be picked up as smoothly as a ball is fielded in cricket. This is the secret of pace, and of holding an audience”’ (88).

Dukore further reports that “When Shaw directed his own plays, or was at hand when they were being produced, he closely supervised their scenic properties” (105). In addition, “Illusion, beauty, and appropriateness are the triadic principles that underlie many of Shaw’s statements on stage scenery” (Dukore 99). My plans didn’t fit with Shaw’s approach, however. I wanted the set and scenery to be functional and anything superfluous simply wouldn’t be on the stage. I believe that Maria Irene Fornes would have agreed as Susan Letzler Cole wrote that “She (Fornes) wishes, in her directing as well as in her writing, to ‘eliminate everything superfluous’” (Robinson 154). I wanted the script and the acting to tell the tale rather than any sort of elaborate background. I was far more interested in following Shaw’s thought that “As a director, he (Shaw) wanted scenery and properties to be credible, to be appropriate to the character and to the practical needs of the dramatic action, and to have beauty” (Dukore 107).
I wanted my set to have everything but beauty. It just didn’t fit with the theme and the process of the play. The very starkness of the play and the period in which I wanted the play to take place dictated this sort of set. Also, my desire to use lighting for set changes followed Shaw’s thoughts regarding pace. It went right along with Shaw’s use of lighting. “In his own plays, Shaw used lighting to enhance both theme and theatricality” (Dukore 117). David Mamet felt that an actor should “never walk on another actor’s lines. The playwright wrote the lines for the benefit of the audience. If you are moving, the attention will go to your movement and away from the line” (Theatre 84). He might have been just as well discussing my lighting dilemma as well as actors on the stage. Being sure that the audience’s attention moved from acting area to acting area smoothly and the lighting didn’t step on any actor’s lines took a lot of practice. As did being sure that the actors were very aware of the lighting changes.

I was very aware that trying to place three acting areas on a typical stage might make it rather crowded and also might make it difficult for lighting to keep track of everything that involved scene changes since it was the lighting booth who made the changes rather than a stage crew. Lighting crew practice was essential for this play for even David Mamet made an error with lighting partly because of lack of preparation. “[He] accidently elbowed the master switch (during a presentation of The Fantastics) and plunged the stage, the house, and the light booth into total darkness for an extended period of time. He never forgot it, or the need for precise and rehearsed movements from the technical crew as well as the actors and staff” (Nadel 41).
It was obvious that, especially with a play in which the sets are not exchanged, the precision of every movement was essential. I didn’t need to worry only about the movement of the actors within the sets, but I did need to be concerned with the attention to detail that the crew was paying to the production. The play went beyond simply bringing up the lights at rise and dimming them when the scene was over. Because the action of the play was continuous, the precision of the lighting was essential. The lighting crew had to practice and rehearse their role as much as the actors did.

Even though there was the potential for a problem, I was still not willing to create more elaborate sets, nor was I willing to toss my idea of placing all of the acting areas on stage at the same time and changing the sets with lighting. What was necessary was to have the actors in the “non-active” acting areas act in a way that did not attract the eye of members of the audience. In actuality, it was in collaboration with the actors that this minor issue was resolved. We found ways for the movement of the actors, if they made any movement, to be subtle and not distracting at all. It did work.
I feel that it was in letting the actors make choices as long as they understood that these choices could not interfere with the intent of the play or eliminate choices from other actors that helped make the rehearsal process as functional and valuable as it ended up being. Ultimately the decision about which choices could stay and which were not workable were mine as the director. As Susan Letzler Cole reports, Maria Irene Fornes said, “The actor’s candid admission, ‘What I’m trying to do is to reduce the possibilities,’ is met by the director’s frank reply: ‘If I had directed the play fifteen times, probably we could trust that there is something rich in certain physical positions. But when I direct a play once, I usually change it, in both the writing and the directing, because the possibilities do not contain the essence: There are enormous possibilities’” (Robinson145).

This play was not only going to be directed only once, but it was going to be performed only once. The ensemble had to mesh because there was never going to be the possibility to explore other possibilities. But I had also had to remember that the actors who were going to perform the play were doing so because they found intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment in doing this and as a result, any heavy handiness would be counterproductive. Having the actors leaving rehearsal with heavy eyes and any feeling of discouragement was not going to work to anyone’s benefit.
As David Mamet writes:

A good rehearsal process will always end on a note of accomplishment, with the actors excited and not overtired. This they associate the scene, the line, the play, with accomplishment and are gently reminded, by the good director, of the truth: that truth being that they understand the play (they understood it when they read it), and that they need not strain themselves trying to being some added intellectualization or “color” or “emotion” to the piece, that they themselves are sufficient, that they are actors. The rehearsal of the scene, the line, the act, the play, must end with the actors happy and confident (Theatre 33).

I put a lot of effort in trying to make each rehearsal session as enjoyable as I could possibly make it. I still had to stress that the actors had to know their lines before real interaction between the characters could take place, but fortunately for me, this was never an issue. These actors worked as hard as I have ever seen a company to nail down their lines which, in some cases, were difficult because some of the phrases were very much baseball oriented and for those actors who were not fascinated by baseball, these phrases might have been hard to remember. And not only that, but these phrases could not be paraphrased as then the meaning would change. I made sure that I knew before rehearsal began which scenes were going to be rehearsed so I would not have actors just sitting around losing their enthusiasm. I have discovered that Paul Kozelka missed the point when he examined the styles of directors and seemed to find some styles lacking. A director who is successful, it seems to me, has a bit of all of these styles in his box of tricks. Preparation is essential; as is flexibility; as is a certain understanding of what it takes to make a play successful.
Rehearsals, as is always necessary, came to an end for the play was going to be performed. I had added a prologue to fill in some blanks that might confuse the audience and make it difficult for them to follow the action. I had added a scene to help with the logistics of character movement on the stage. I had added an intermission for pretty much the same reason. And I had eliminated radio play-by-play that was to be an almost inaudible background sound during some of the scenes because I couldn’t get the sound at the right volume where the audience could recognize it as play-by-play and still hear the actors. But, for the most part, the play was going to be presented as it was originally written. The actors and I were confident that the play was going to be a hit.
CHAPTER IV

PERFORMING BILLY SHAW

For many reasons, not all of them personal, I desperately wanted *Billy Shaw* to be a wonderful show. And for it to be a wonderful show, everything had to fall into place. As the theater was located in a high school and the company was made up of students who were members of that high school, everything depended upon me. I had to be certain that the actors were prepared, the stage crew was prepared, the lighting crew was prepared, and that the sets were what I had envisioned. However, more than anything, I had to remember what George Bernard Shaw believes when he writes “[t]he beginning and the end of the business (of play production) from the author’s point of view is the art of making audiences believe that real things are happening to real people” (Dukore 11). However, David Mamet feels that:

Drama is a mystery. It is an exploration (undertaken by both the artists and the audience) of the unconscious. Outside of the work done on simple physical adjustments (voice and diction and speech), the work of the play should be done by the writer – freeing the actor to play. There is in truth, no “emotional” work or “preparation” done by any actor that can be better than his spontaneity, just as it requires a very good set indeed to be a better platform for presentation than a bare stage and a great direction to be better than silence (*Theatre* 92).
He continues by saying, the only thing that matters is that “when the audience is involved in wanting to know what happens next, it comes alive. When it no longer cares, the play is, in effect, over” (Theatre 125).

The play had been written, the play had been rehearsed, the set had been designed, and programs and tickets had been printed. All that was left was for the audience to see the play. It was true that the play was being presented to be a part of my Master’s Thesis, but I wanted it, quite naturally, to be more than that. I now understood completely David Mamet’s admonition that “[i]n truth, then, one might reason that the only purpose of drama is to entertain the audience” (Theatre 126). I guess it would be self-serving and arrogant for me to want anything else. I had followed Aristotle in his Poetics during the construction of the play, that being “[t]here we find that a plot is the necessary structure of the incidents (that is, scenes), the failure of each scene driving the hero on toward a new attempt at the solution of the goal stated at the play’s outset” (Mamet Theatre 127). Indeed, everything was ready.

The opening scene, which I have titled the Prologue simply because it was added to the play after the rest of the play was written, is intended to create a mystery. It is obvious that the two young people who are entering the stage are in love, but like many lovers, they have some issues that need to be ironed out. It is the very fact that there are these issues that create one of the plot threads that runs through the play. What kind of person is Billy Shaw? And why does Alexis’ father have such animosity toward Billy Shaw?
I decided that this scene would be played with the curtain closed and the actors on the apron as it was a fourth acting area and trying to squeeze it onto the stage would have been too much. In addition, having the curtain closed gave me the opportunity to use the spotlight to simulate the moon which was a major set piece for this scene. Further, the actors and I worked very hard to time the dialogue so that the dialogue would fill the entire scene from the entrance from stage right to the exit on stage left. As Shaw would have desired, I wanted Steven and Alexis to be offering their final words of endearment as they are leaving the stage. And bless their hearts, the actors did just that.

When Act I opens, there is a contradiction between the connection of Steven and Alexis in the Prologue and the connection between the baseball fans and Billy Shaw. “You are perfect” (Appendix 67) is what Steven says to Alexis whereas a fan calls Billy Shaw a bum (Appendix 68). This stark contrast was intended to heighten the mystery of what the play is about and follow Aristotle’s dictum that the audience should always be wondering what is going to happen next. However, as in any exposition, I immediately began to develop character, plot, and setting. I had Billy leave the ball field, exit stage right, and then immediately enter Pop’s office. In order to heighten suspense, I had the lights dim more slowly than in subsequent scenes on the ball field and rise more slowly on Pop’s office that in subsequent scenes. Further, Pop was already in his office before the scene began and so when Billy enters, there can be a moment of silence (I suspect that Shaw would have likely hated that and Fornes would have likely heartily approved) to enhance the tension already begun by the lighting. Not only does the audience not know
who the gentleman sitting behind the desk is at this point, but they really have no idea of what is going to occur in this scene. It was essential, though, that the actors not milk the silence because the audience could potentially become bored with simply watching two actors sitting on stage saying nothing. Timing had to be precise. And the actors pulled it off almost perfectly. My decision to have Billy break the silence was an effort to begin to develop both characters. Pop was going to give Billy all the rope Billy needed and Billy, even after all of the success he has enjoyed throughout his career, still has doubts. I didn’t want to play this too much though as this was to be a dominant theme throughout the play and I wanted the audience to continue to wonder where the relationship between the two men was headed. And also I wanted to introduce the villain and develop the relationship between Perkins and pretty much everyone else in the play. The actor who played Perkins did a wonderful job of portraying the arrogance and oiliness of the character. In fact, a couple of days before opening, the actor who was playing Perkins confided that he didn’t like Perkins even though that was the character he was playing. In a short play like *Billy Shaw*, I’m not sure that I can develop a character like Perkins who has redeeming qualities. Perhaps if I revisit *Billy Shaw* and expand upon the ideas and characters presented, maybe I could create a fuller character in Perkins.

The next scene is designed to introduce Beth and continue to develop the characters of Billy and Steven. Beth is already in the kitchen when the lights come up. The actress who played Beth chose to begin the play in the kitchen rather than enter during the scene between Pop, Billy, and Perkins. In retrospect, this was fortuitous as I
couldn’t get the lighting in the non-acting areas dim enough to have actors move around in them without distracting the audience. Therefore, having Beth simply sit at the table acting as though she were reading something rather than having her enter while action was being performed in another acting area could have been distracting. But this way, the audience likely noted her presence and since she wasn’t doing anything interesting, promptly focused their attention on Pop’s office. Nevertheless, during the scene in the kitchen, the genesis of the gentleness and kindness in Steven becomes obvious as Beth and later Billy exhibit the same gentleness and kindness that Steven showed during the prologue.

The lighting then moves quickly from the kitchen to Pop’s office where Henderson, the owner of the team, and Pop, the manager, are engaged in conversation. I had Pop, who was still on stage during the scene previous to the kitchen scene remain on stage and act as though he was doing paper work and then have Henderson come in during the kitchen scene and then immediately do nothing so he wouldn’t divert the audience’s attention from the action in the kitchen. However, by doing this, I didn’t need to have Henderson enter and the scene can begin in the middle of the conversation. This was done intentionally for as Ross Wetzsteon reported that Maria Irene Fornes said, “I don’t like scenes to build up or peter out. In fact, I don’t even like to present the entire scene – most of my scenes actually start in the middle, almost at the climax. That way, both the writing and the acting go from one critical moment to the next” (Robinson 31). In fact, much of Billy Shaw follows Fornes’ direction “Almost all of her (Fornes) plays
have been written in a series of brief scenes. She’s more concerned with the emotional core of a situation than with its quotidian details, she focuses on the psychological pivot of a relationship rather than on its causes or consequences” (Robinson 31). It is because *Billy Shaw* is set in such brief scenes that I decided to have lighting change sets rather than the sets be changed *in toto* for every scene.

It is during this scene, however, that we add another couple of conflicts to this play. Not only is Pop in danger of being fired, but he is also being forced to accept the hated presence of Perkins (although Henderson makes it clear that Perkins does not have *carte blanche*). We learn that although Henderson is not going to interfere with the operation of his ball club (he was going to let the professionals handle that), he was also going to make sure that everyone connected to the Colonels, including Perkins, knew who was in charge.

While Henderson, Perkins, and Pop are having their discussion in Pop’s office, Billy has slipped to bench and is sitting there quietly. After Perkins has left Pop’s office, he moves to the bench where the lights are beginning to rise and attempts to engage Billy in conversation. It is apparent, however, that Billy doesn’t hold Perkins in any higher regard than does Pop and Billy refuses to engage. Perkins, after a well-timed moment of silence, gives up on the conversation and moves on. Following Shaw’s advice to avoid moments of silence except as a stage effect, just as Perkins is leaving, Pop comes on stage and through their conversation, one conflict is examined more deeply and another begins.
Again, I want the audience to keep wondering and so I cut the scene at its psychological height (following the ideas of Fornes) and move in the direction that was begun during the Prologue, but was intentionally left a bit unclear. And that would be the relationship between Steven and Alexis. We also learn more about the character of Beth during this exchange. I again end it before any sort of resolution can take place.

Then *deus ex machina* is employed. Billy has to go to the bench, not because of his poor play, but because of an injury and of course, it is Steven who is called up from the minor leagues to take his place on the roster. This reveals Billy’s ultimate goal. Other characters may have their own goals, but Billy’s is that he wants Steven to play for the major league team before Billy retires. But, the scene quickly moves in another direction (after all, other characters have their goals as well). We not only learn about another conflict, but we also learn a bit more about Billy and Alexis.

The play then moves to Pop’s office where we learn of the genuine humanness of Pop. We can assume that Pop is a successful handler of players because he truly cares about the feelings, hopes, and dreams of all of the men under his instruction. We have also learned that Pop has his pragmatic side as well.

As next scene develops we learn as much as ever as we ever do the reason for the vitriol Perkins exhibits toward Billy Shaw. However, Alexis, during this scene, is faced with a dilemma and shows her independence (and also her need for parenting) by walking away from her father and heading straight to Beth for consolation. It is during this scene that the relationship between Steven and Alexis is intensified. The actors at this point are
playing their roles perfectly. They are playing their parts as if the rest of the play (the parts of the play that their character is not privy to) were not occurring. They are not emoting unnecessarily and relaying their lines as they should. This was wonderful, for in the final analysis, there was little I could do as the director to make changes in the actor’s approach to his/her role. As David Mamet mentioned in his book *Theatre*:

Not so the director. So the mill of his mind, turning, turning, turning, turning, may and usually does turn to theory and to instruction. But there is, truly, little for him to instruct.

What is the play about, what is the scene about, stand there, move downstage of the couch on such a word, don’t walk on the other fellow’s laugh, the blue drapes rather than the red – that’s about the limit of the director’s actual job.

For the rest, he is deluding himself. For like the plane in a spin, if the pilot gets himself out of the way, it will right itself. The actor’s true talent and job is to inhabit – whatever that may mean to him- the part. To stand still and say the words – in order to accomplish something like that purpose indicated by the author. That’s it (32-33).

The rush of the play toward fulfilling Billy’s goal is consummated in the next scene which takes place in Pop’s office when we find that Billy is ready to return to the team from his injury and Steven will stay with the Major League team. Billy will have
his opportunity to play on the same field as his son and be certain the Shaw name will continue in baseball annals.

The next scene shows Alexis and Beth sitting in the Shaw kitchen talking about Steven and Billy and the relationship that the men have with baseball. This scene, and others, was intended not only to further develop the characters involved, but also to foreshadow the ending of the play. Again, this is to keep the audience wondering what is going to happen next for of the several conflicts which have been presented thus far, only a few have even begun to be resolved. Much is to be seen.

Finally we reach the scene which is still in the Shaw kitchen where Beth is expressing her conflict in the play and what she is looking for in order to be able to resolve it. Her problem is, though, that her conflict involves Billy and it is Billy who needs to resolve the conflict for Beth. This is quite possibly the most frustrating conflict of all and one which likely everyone in the audience has dealt with at some level. The actress who played Beth had to tread a thin line here. She couldn’t overplay it or she would overwhelm the action and the script and yet she needed to play it strong enough so the audience could develop a sense of catharsis which will continue their interest in the play. The actress was wonderful. She not only delivered the lines perfectly, but she showed her body physically perfectly on the stage so the audience not only could hear her frustration, but see it. She was also wonderful in the way that she showed the audience the genuine affection she had for Billy after the confrontation. It was excellent.
The relationship between Perkins and his daughter Alexis reaches a climax in the next scene. The two of them are sitting in the stands waiting for the ball game to begin and are making small talk. The discussion escalates, however, and Alexis is forced to make a choice between her relationship with her father or her relationship with Steven. She decides to leave her father and run to the only other parental figure she has – Beth. We see in this scene the intense mother-daughter relationship which has grown between the two women off stage ever since Steven introduced Alexis to Beth.

Ezra Perkins isn’t going to give up so easily. He has a predetermined path for his daughter and it apparently doesn’t include Steven Shaw. However, when he arrives at the Shaw house, he is rebuffed by Beth and sent packing. This can only create more rancor between the two families.

But, another sticky situation is rearing its head at this point. The owner of the baseball team has just approached Pop about firing Billy when Billy returns from the DL. We get an inkling of how Pop is going to handle this news when we find out that he used considerable political capital to get Steven called up to the Major Leagues from the minors after Billy was injured. He didn’t handle it well. Mr. Henderson, though, gives in. It is likely that with his team in first place, he doesn’t want to upset the apple cart.

The next scene is very short, but was intended to simply remind the audience of Billy’s goal which was set in the beginning of the play.

Pop, in the next scene, has to deal with Perkins, once again, trying to run things. However, after having Mr. Henderson back down just a little earlier, Pop is emboldened
and sends Perkins packing. Perkins, apparently realizing that he probably should bow gracefully at this point, does just that.

The climax of the play is the next scene. It is on the ball field and Billy and Steven are reliving, in a sense, Steven’s childhood when he and Billy were playing baseball in the backyard. Things occur just as Billy had wanted and, as he had mentioned several times during the play, this was all he needed to feel fulfilled. The gods intervene at this point as Billy is struck in the head by a pitch and is killed.

The falling action includes Perkins, in a rather vindictive vein, walking into Pop’s office and crowing over Billy’s death. Pop, quite predictably, is in no mood to listen to Perkins and reacts with amazing calm, but deadly calm. In addition, Pop accidently uses the same words Alexis had used the last time she and her father had spoken, that they just couldn’t listen to Perkins any longer, Perkins is cowed and leaves. At this point, Steven and Alexis enter, make comments which could be considered a eulogy and the play ends.
CHAPTER V

AFTER THE PLAY

It is rare that individuals have been able to function separately from a larger community. After all, as William James writes, “The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community” (Hartmann The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight 304). Without the encouragement of the community, it appears that nothing in human society actually occurs. I’m not sure what it is about athletic events that are performed at a high level of excellence that is so fascinating for the rest of us who are unable to perform at that level. Why are we willing to expend the product of our labor (money in this case) and our time watching other people perform? This question, however, not only alludes to baseball, but also to theater. People will pay money and spend two or three hours sitting in an auditorium watching actors tell a tale on the stage. Could this be a product of always wondering what is going to happen in the next few seconds? Could this be a product of an audience member letting their spirit (one possible metaphor) inhabit the actor (or ballplayer) and achieve a catharsis in this way? A possible analogy here could be that each member of a community is as a cell of a larger organism and what affects one cell has a ripple effect upon all others. If we could but see an individual as simply a piece of a larger organism, much of what occurs in a society begins to make sense. Ralph Waldo Emerson might have understood my thought as he writes, “Standing on the bare ground a mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the
currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God” (Hartmann *The Prophet’s Way* 297). Saying this in a slightly different manner was Chief Luther Standing Bear when he states, “The man who sat on the group in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting kinship of all creatures and acknowledging unity with the universe of things was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization. And when native man left off this form of development, his humanization was retarded in growth” (Hartmann *The Prophet’s Way* 196). Chief Standing Bear may have been trying to say that our culture is missing the point by focusing strictly upon the human culture in which he finds himself. Emerson was even more universal with his thought than Chief Standing Bear or me, but the core of the ideas is about the same. But this paper is to examine theater and the playwright’s relationship to it and that is where the focus should lie. Not only that, but the paper was also to examine the playwright’s relationship with the production of a play and how this production interacts with the audience. “[I]t is the juxtaposition in the mind of the audience between the spoken word of the author and the simple directed-but-uninflected action of the actor which creates the ineluctable idea of character in the mind of the audience” (Mamet *True and False* 10). If a play is created and performed with a high enough level of excellence, then the audience cannot avoid this sense of catharsis even if some of it is beyond their ken.

This last chapter of the thesis was to be about what happened in the play when it was performed on stage, how these occurrences were different from what I had anticipated, and the reasons why these differences occurred. In the final analysis,
however, that would make for a very short chapter for the play played almost exactly as I had envisioned. It turned out that nearly everything that was even remotely a kink raised its ugly head during rehearsal and was ironed out at that time. The play actually went very smoothly and, in my opinion, played very well. And so, I guess, the question here is not why the play didn’t play as I thought it would, but why did it? Not only that, but why was the audience able to enjoy a production which was, in a number of ways, rather esoteric?

During one of the last days of my classroom experience in the theater program at The University of Akron, we were asked to involve our classmates in a project of our choosing. I chose to have some of my classmates perform a scene from Billy Shaw. After the exercise was completed, reactions from the remainder of the group were requested. The first reaction that came from the class was from a gentleman who was responding because he didn’t completely understand everything that was occurring during the scene as he wasn’t that familiar with baseball. His suggestion was that I should tone down the baseball “lingo” a bit and make that part of my play more assessable to the nonfan. My immediate thought at that moment was that the play would lose some of its authenticity if I did that, but I could put some context into the play to make some of the terms more understandable. He also seemed to make it clear through his tone that he didn’t really like the play anyway which did temper any enthusiasm I might have had toward changing the wording of the play. Then, however, another member of the class spoke up and said that the play was fine as it was and would likely
lose something if the wording was changed which, I felt, validated *Billy Shaw* as it was written. Remembering this incident brought to mind something that occurred on the night that the play was presented. I overheard a woman whom I assumed was a grandmother telling a friend, chuckling as she relayed the tale, that she would have failed to understand parts of the play if she hadn’t had her seven-year-old grandson with her to fill her in on the scenes she didn’t quite get. In addition, the amount of baseball in the play is relatively small. The play is mostly about wending your way toward dreams you realize may never happen. As Henry David Thoreau writes, “This world is but canvas to our imagination” (*Hartmann The Prophet’s Way* 254). Billy Shaw struggled to realize a dream he had created an untold period of time in the past. It was that dream, however, that kept him going and that is universal.

Robert Kennedy writes, “Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly. The future does not belong to those who are content with today, apathetic toward common problems and their fellow man alike, timid and fearful in the face of bold projects and new ideas. Rather, it will belong to those who can bleed passion, reason and courage in a personal commitment to the ideals of American Society” (*Hartmann The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* 338). Those in the audience saw Billy Shaw fight through his own doubts, and the doubts of others. We can only imagine the heights to which Billy had risen and the depths to which he had fallen in the decades before the play began, but all knew that now was the time of Billy’s destiny. William Jennings Bryan once said in an inspiring speech, “Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of
choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved” (Hartmann The Prophet’s Way 164). There were those in the audience who told me after the show had finished that they wished I had ended the play differently. But as John Steinbeck wrote in Travels With Charley, “I see too many men delay their exits with a sickly, slow reluctance to leave the stage. It’s bad theater as well as bad living” (Hartmann The Prophet’s Way 161). We all can relate. Billy had three great loves: his wife, his son, and baseball. Baseball was leaving him simply because of the passage of time and as Beth said, “Oh, I wish he would quit so badly sometimes, but I’m afraid of what not playing ball will do to him” (Appendix 84). There will always be the question of whether Billy could have continued with his life without baseball. Baseball was the one thing that validated Billy. As Meister Eckhart once said, “One must not always think so much about what one should do, but rather what one should be. Our works do not ennoble us; but we must ennoble our works” (Hartmann The Prophet’s Way 66).

In addition, many in the audience must remember someone who showed kindness toward them for no apparent reason. This was for no other reason than that person found something inside of the audience member that was important in way that the recipient of the kindness never knew was there. As Jimmy said, “Mr. Shaw always seems to care whether I’m doing well or not. He always treats me as though I’m just as important to the team as the players” (Appendix 81). William Wordsworth included in one of his poems, “That best portion of a good man’s life, His little, nameless, unremembered acts, of kindness and love” (Hartmann The Prophet’s Way 267). I suspect that many in the
audience, even if they were not enamored of baseball had begun to identify with Billy Shaw.

Finally, why baseball? That was the assignment. I suspect that, as a child, my first coherent sentence was “Take me out to the ballgame” and the assignment was my life real or imagined. But not only that, this play was suitable as it was definitely theater. Further, this is a story of our culture. I do have to remember, though, it may not play well in any culture other than ours. It has been said that baseball is a microcosm of American life and this play weaves itself around baseball. I don’t feel that an intimate knowledge of baseball is necessary to enjoy the play. In fact, one audience member told me after the play that there was only one portion of the play which confused her because it was so much baseball. But I think we need to continue to tell tales which our culture develops. As Ari Ma’ayan once said, “A culture without its storytellers will eventually cease to be a culture” (Hartmann The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight 321). We need to continue to tell our tales for the failure to do so is unthinkable.

The play was wonderful. It was everything I could have possibly imagined. My theory of why it played almost exactly as I had imagined, even when I was writing it, was not only had I written it and directed it as I imagined it to be played, but also I had an excellent rapport with the actors previous to even the auditions. As a result, the success of the play became a group project. Not one player was concerned that they weren’t going to get the billing they wanted nor did a single actor let ego get in the way of their performance. Every single actor was superb. The play was good.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX

BILLY SHAW
a play

The setting is in the early 1950’s

CAST

UMPIRE
BALLPLAYERS
BILLY SHAW. an aging superstar baseball player.
VARIOUS SPECTATORS (note: as many actors can have speaking roles as spectators as the director wishes. Three are listed merely for convenience.)
POP JACKSON . . . manager of the Louisville Colonels.
EZRA PERKINS . . . a sportswriter for the Louisville Press newspaper.
JIMMY . . . clubhouse boy for the Louisville Colonels.
BETH SHAW . . . BILLY SHAW’s wife.
STEVEN SHAW . . . BILLY and BETH’s son.
BURGESS HENDERSON . . . owner of the Colonels.
ALEXIS PERKINS . . . PERKINS’ daughter
ANNOUNCER
TRAINER

There should be three acting areas: the bench with the facsimile of a ball field behind it, the Shaw’s kitchen, and Pop’s office. Set changes should change using lighting rather than adding and subtracting props. Actors who are not in the scene being played could still be on stage in their acting area with the area simply in shadows. This should help with reducing difficulties with entrances and exits. There is no necessity for realistic movement between acting areas which means an actor could leave one acting area and move across bare stage to another. Sound cues primarily have to do with a radio in the Shaw’s kitchen which can be eliminated if the director feels it is too distracting. Other cues have to do with actor movements.
PROLOGUE

While the audience is coming into the auditorium, lights on upstage on bleachers that have spectators coming in and taking seats. There are ballplayers warming up before the game and some are signing autographs. With just a few minutes before curtain, the ballplayers and the umpire should get into position and pantomime playing a game. (note: if the stage is large enough and the director wishes, ballplayers in the field would add to the effect.) Downstage should remain dark. Just before the beginning of the play the curtain should be drawn so that the prologue can be done on the apron with the curtain drawn. The image should be as though STEVEN and ALEXIS are in some undefined place walking in the moonlight.

(STEVEN and ALEXIS enter right.)

ALEXIS: Look at the moon, Steven. Isn’t it beautiful?

STEVEN: Sure it is, Alexis. It’s full. What isn’t there to like about a full moon?

ALEXIS: (laughing) Don’t make fun of me, Steven. I just like to be romantic, that’s all. It’s like Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio. Isn’t that a perfect love story? They must have looked at a full moon just like this one.

STEVEN: (hugging ALEXIS) That’s fine with me. I’ve just seen so many full moons at the ballpark that they’re not new to me anymore. But if you like it, then I hope every night has a full moon.

ALEXIS: You ballplayers. I don’t think there’s a single one of you with a romantic bone in your body. It’s just that all’s right with the world when there’s a full moon, the Lexington ball club has won, and my man has gone three for four.

STEVEN: I hope you don’t expect that out of me every night. It’s not as easy as it looks from the stands.

ALEXIS: I don’t understand why my father doesn’t get that it isn’t that easy. He seems to expect your father to carry the Colonels every night and if he doesn’t . . . then he tears him apart in the newspaper. I wish he could see him as the fine human being he is rather than as a ballplayer.

STEVEN: I know. But that is how the world sees my dad. As a ballplayer that is. He has set so many records and played so long that hardly anyone sees him as anything but a ballplayer. But it isn’t true. My dad is just wonderful in every way. He seemed to be able to make up for being gone so much so perfectly. I never felt as though I was
deprived growing up. I suppose I can give a lot of credit for that to my mother, but my
dad . . . well, what can I say? What am I saying? You grew up without a mother at all . . .
that had to have been tough.

ALEXIS: Not so bad. And now I have you and I’m sure I’ll fit in with your family just
fine if your mom and dad are as easy going as you tell me they are. I’m so sure we’ll all
get along. Why, President Eisenhower said that . . .

STEVEN: Alexis, they’re going to love you. You are perfect.

ALEXIS: Don’t go setting me on a pedestal that I can’t stand on. I’m not perfect. But, I
do love you. And I guess that counts for something. I just wish my dad could see you
and your family the wonderful way they are. He can be kind and gentle when he wants to
be, but this vendetta he has against your father . . . I just don’t get it.

STEVEN: I think he just wants to sell newspapers. I know the Colonels aren’t playing the
way they should be and he tears down everything about the Colonels, but why he is so
relentless against my dad, I just don’t get. He’s only a part of the club. But, it’s like he
wants to tear down anything that is iconic. I understand that my dad isn’t the player he
used to be, but he still plays well enough to hold down his place on the team. I know I’m
not exactly objective about this, but I do know baseball and my dad can still play.

ALEXIS: I know baseball too and I agree, your dad can still play. And I can be
objective. Well, in a way.

STEVEN: I wonder if it’s our family your dad has an issue with. When I get to
Louisville, I wonder if he’ll get on me the way he gets on my dad.

ALEXIS: Steven, you’re more thick-skinned than that. Think about what some of the
fans here in Lexington yell at you when you strike out with a runner on third. You let
that roll off of your back. You just have to be like your dad and ignore what my father
writes in his column.

STEVEN: I’m not so sure my dad is able to let all of what your dad writes in the paper
“roll off of his back” as easily as you think.

ALEXIS: Steven, we only have tonight and then it’s back to the grind. Let’s not talk
about our fathers. Let’s just be together and be “us”.

STEVEN: Okay. I’ll tell you what. Next week we have an off day on Thursday between
the series with the Pioneers and the series with the Crocodiles. Let’s go to Louisville
then and at least meet my mom. My dad has a game that afternoon, but maybe he’ll get home in time to meet you too.

ALEXIS: Good idea. I’m nervous, but I’m looking forward to it.

(STEVEN and ALEXIS exit left.)

When the curtain opens, BETH should be in her kitchen bustling around until the game begins. When the game begins, BETH should move to the radio and listen to it.

AT RISE: UMPIRE, CATCHER, AND PITCHER are in position with BILLY SHAW at bat.

ANNOUNCER: The count is full with two out and the bases are jammed with Colonels. Billy Shaw steps into the box and pinwheels the bat around his head. Shaw’s been struggling over the last few games, but with the number of years he has behind him, Billy knows what he needs to do and what to expect from the pitcher Lemmon. Jones is taking a walking lead off of first. With the score two to one here in the bottom of the ninth, his run means nothing. He just needs to avoid being forced at second. Henderson slips behind the baseline so he can hit third base in full stride on a base hit to the outfield. Fields creeps down the third baseline. He’s the tying run. Lemmon looks around at his infielders. Now, he looks in for the sign. He doesn’t have any margin for error because a wide one will tie the game. Lemmon kicks into the wind and here’s the pitch. Oh, I can’t believe it; Shaw takes it for a called strike three. The game is over and the Colonels lose 2-1. Lemmon is the complete game winner and Hamilton is the tough luck loser. Well, it’s back to our station for ID and a quick look at the latest news and then right back here for a review of the game and the Saran Wrap wrap-up of the ball game. (note: the announcer can either be on stage or off stage giving the illusion of playing through the radio in the Shaw kitchen.)

The SPECTATORS begin to moan and grumble.

BILLY stands at home plate while UMPIRE and BALLPLAYERS exit right. He then walks dejectedly in front of the bleachers carrying a baseball bat in one hand and sits on the bench.

SPECTATOR #1: Hey, Shaw, when ya goin’ to hang ‘em up, ya bum!

SPECTATOR #2: Yea, how many times ya gotta strike out and lose the ballgame before ya get the message!
SPECTATOR #3: When ya goin’ to leave us in peace and go back ta Idaho or wherever you from?

SPECTATOR #1: Yea, Shaw, when you goin’ back to Omaha! (He looks around to see if any other of the SPECTATORS gets his witiness.)

SPECTATOR #4: Don’t listen to them, Billy, you’re the best there ever was and ever will be!

SPECTATOR #1: Oh, yeah….just read Perkins’ latest column and you’ll change your mind!

SPECTATOR #2: Yeah, when’s Pop going to put a real ballplayer out there in center!

SPECTATOR #3: Hey, maybe he’ll let me! I can strike out just as well as Shaw can!

SPECTATOR #5: You just shut up! You couldn’t carry Billy Shaw’s cap!

SPECTATOR #3: Don’t you tell me to shut up! Billy Shaw’s done and you know it!

SPECTATOR #4: I don’t care what Perkins writes. Billy Shaw’s a great player and always will be and if you didn’t read Perkins’ trash, you’d agree.

The SPECTATORS continue to argue and some continue to hurl insults at BILLY and generally grumble as BILLY moves downstage to POP’s office.

The lights fade upstage and come up down right on POP’s office.

POP is sitting behind his desk when BILLY enters. BILLY sits in chair and slumps. POP and BILLY sit in silence for a moment.

POP: You know, Billy, I wouldn’t have left you in there if I didn’t think you had it in you to deliver.

BILLY: I don’t know, Pop. When do you know when to hang it up? I still think I got it or I wouldn’t hang around here any more and embarrass you and the guys. I haven’t had a hit for six games now. But, you know, Pop, I’m seein’ the ball just as well as ever. I just can’t seem to shake this slump.

POP: You will, Billy. I know you will and you will carry the ball club right to the pennant just like you always have. You’re our star and you are the reason a lot of these
people are coming to the ballpark and if you don’t please them once in a while, well, that’s just baseball. Those guys in the other dugout want to win just as badly as we do and they’re going to do all they can to beat us. Billy, I have faith in you. I promise you, when I lose that faith, you’ll know it because you’ll be riding the bench.

BILLY: I . . . (PERKINS who had been sitting in the bleachers, walks across the ball diamond and then walks in to POP’s office without being invited.)

PERKINS: I’m not interrupting, am I?

POP: No more than usual. What do you want, Perkins?

PERKINS: Just a little interview for our readers with wonder boy here.

POP looks at BILLY to see how BILLY is responding to the intrusion.

BILLY: I have nothing to say to Perkins.

PERKINS: Aw, c’mon Billy. Just a quote. What was that last pitch? Why did you take it with two strikes? (He turns to POP.) When are you going to see the light and bench him? (He turns back to BILLY.) When are you going to quit so you can give that speech when you get into Cooperstown? Or do you have any doubt? What is going on here? When are the Colonels going to turn their back on the past and head into the future? Why are you two . . .?

POP (standing up behind his desk): That’s enough Perkins! Just leave! We already know that anything we say will be twisted so much by the time it gets into the paper that not even we will know who said what.

PERKINS: We have an obligation to our fans. . . .

BILLY: And we have an obligation to our fans to be sure that only the real story is told and if we talk to you, we know that won’t happen.

PERKINS: Billy, people like me made you and without us . . . .

POP: Jimmy! Hey, Jimmy!

(Jimmy appears at the office door.)

JIMMY: Yea, Pop.
POP: Could you show Mr. Perkins outside? I think he’s lost his way.

PERKINS: Now wait a minute! You can’t treat me this way!

JIMMY: Just this way Mr. Perkins. The clubhouse gets confusing for people who don’t come here often. Especially those who aren’t welcome. (JIMMY continues to talk to PERKINS as he leads him upstage to the bleacher area.)

BILLY slumps back into the chair as lights fade down right and come up down left on the SHAW kitchen where BETH is bustling around the kitchen. STEVEN enters left.

STEVEN: Hey, mom.

(BILLY leaves the office)

BETH: Steven! How good to see you! (She moves to him and embraces him) It’s so good to have you home. What? Did your game end early?

STEVEN: Yea, Tomlinson was pitching and he always throws like he’s got a plane to catch. And not only that, he threw a shutout. Takes no time at all. (He leans down and takes a piece of whatever BETH is making and pops it in his mouth. BETH playfully slaps at his hand.)

BETH: I’m glad you’re here, but the rules of the house are still the same as when you were a little boy. Don’t spoil your supper by snacking before we sit down. Your father should be home soon, his game ended about an hour ago.

STEVEN: I know. I was listening to the game on the radio while I was driving over from Lexington. I don’t know, Mom. Dad is the greatest ballplayer who ever walked the earth, but the way he’s been playing lately, I just don’t know...

BETH: Now, Steven, your father will know when it’s time to quit. He’s a smart man and has been playing baseball all of his life and he’ll know.

STEVEN: I hope you’re right, mom. You know that it really bothers me when the guys shake their heads and, you know, all those things. But, we can’t forget that there’s all of those ballplayers who really appreciate Dad because he’s helped them through the years. They understand how important Dad is.
BETH: Just trust your father, Steven, he’ll know. Well, I’d better go set the table so your father can eat when he gets home. I know he’ll be tired.

BETH exits left.

(BILLY has left POP’s office and crossed to the kitchen entering from right.)

STEVEN: Hi, Dad.

BILLY: Steven! You had a quick game?

STEVEN: Yea, Tomlinson threw a shutout and you know him.

BILLY: I know. He’s always throwing like the end of the world is coming. Well, it’s good to see you. How did you do?

STEVEN (unable to keep a grin off of his face): Well, I started in center and went two for three and got both RBIs with a sac fly and a double.

BILLY (grinning): You keep this up and no one’ll know me for a ballplayer. I’ll just be Steven Shaw’s dad. Any word on when you’ll be brought up to the big club.

STEVEN: Naw, nothing yet, but the way things are going . . . You know, with the club falling into third and all, the Colonels almost have to call me up with the season I’m having.

BILLY (throwing his arm around STEVEN’s shoulder): I can’t wait! It’ll be just like we’ve always dreamed. Father and son on the field playing ball together. How perfect would that be? But . . . don’t forget about Johansson. He’s the golden boy and the front office will probably bring him up first.

STEVEN: It doesn’t matter. I’ll be called up eventually and it’ll be great, Dad! I’d set the table for you and you’d drive me in, just like in the backyard when I was little.

BETH enters from left

BETH: Billy! You’re home! (They embrace and BILLY kisses her.)

BILLY: Have I got it good! I get home and the most beautiful woman in the world and the greatest ballplayer on the planet are waiting for me. How could it be any better?
BETH (pleased): Oh, go on. C’mon in to the dining room and let’s eat before Steven has
to go back to Lexington. (She grabs STEVEN’s cheek) I don’t know what they’re feeding
you down there, but you get skinnier every time I see you. Goodness sakes. I’ll have to
fatten you up all over again.

BILLY: Listen to her, Steven. (BILLY pats his stomach.) She sure has done it to me.
(The three of them laugh as they exit left.)

Lights fade on the kitchen and come up on POP’s office where HENDERSON and POP
are engaged in conversation.

HENDERSON: Mr. Jackson, you must see reason. Without newspaper coverage our
team just won’t draw and having a revenue stream is the life blood of this club. ---- Now,
I have never interfered with the way you run the club, but when the Louisville Press
sends a reporter over here to cover our team, we must let him do his job.

POP: Mr. Henderson, I understand better than you think I do, but that Perkins is just
plain poison and he will make things worse than they would be without any coverage at
all.

HENDERSON: Why, because he lampooned Billy Shaw last week. Maybe Shaw
deserved it. He hasn’t been playing the way I expected him to when I signed him to that
last contract. Maybe that extra security has caused him to . . . .

POP (slamming his fist on the desk): Now you just wait one minute. Billy Shaw would
never lay down under any circumstances. He’s been playing ball longer than most of the
boys on this team have been alive. He knows what is at stake and you can be sure that he
will play this game right and never think twice about any contract.

HENDERSON (leaning over the desk): No! You just wait one minute. YOUR contract
is up at the end of this season and if this team doesn’t win the pennant, I may have to
make some changes and move in another direction. I respect Billy Shaw and all he has
brought to the game of baseball, but there is a time to walk away for all of us and maybe
this is the time for Billy Shaw to spend some time on the bench and collect his thoughts
or maybe just hang them up for good.

(The two are silent for a moment)

HENDERSON (calmer): Now, Mr. Jackson. I want you to do some serious thinking
about how the Colonels are going to win tomorrow night’s game. You also need to do
some serious thinking about how the lineup is going to look and how we’re going to beat that young pitcher the Cubs’ll be throwing at us.

PERKINS enters up right and crosses to the door to POP’s office. He leans on the door frame and looks into the office.

PERKINS: Mr. Jackson, I see you have company, may I come in.

POP looks at HENDERSON and then turns back to PERKINS.

POP: Yes, yes, come on in. I suppose you’re officially part of the club now.

PERKINS walks into the office with a swagger to his step.

PERKINS: Yes, Pop, I guess we’ll be seeing a lot of each other at least for the rest of the season. After that, we’ll just see who’s still standing. (PERKINS leans forward) You or me.

POP looks at HENDERSON with an appeal in his face.

HENDERSON (sympathetically): Pop, this is what we’ve been handed. We have to live with it. (Turning to PERKINS) Mr. Perkins, if I find that your presence is disruptive to my ball club, I may have to do without the Louisville Press.

PERKINS: You know, Mr. Henderson, I don’t think you can. You need me more than I need you. Without me, your ball club will just fade into the landscape and die. Me . . . without the ball club, I’ll just have to go cover fires or something, but I’ll survive.

HENDERSON starts to say something, but thinks better of it, leaves POP’s office and exits up right. POP looks down and pretends to be shuffling through some papers. PERKINS stands in front of POP’s desk patiently. While this is happening, BILLY, BETH, and STEVEN enter left into the kitchen and pantomime saying goodbye. STEVEN exits left, BILLY exits to the ball diamond where he sits on the bench, and BETH works in the kitchen.

PERKINS: You know, Pop, I can stand here as long as you like. Eventually, you’ll have to talk to me.

POP: What! Are you still here! I thought you’d be out trying to dig up some dirt on a grandmother somewhere. Look, Perkins, do all of us a favor and sit up there in the stands, watch the game, and report what you see – not what you imagine!
PERKINS: Later, Pop.

PERKINS leaves POP’s office, moves across the ball diamond to where BILLY is sitting. Lights go down downstage right and up upstage.

PERKINS: Well, slugger, how d’ya think tonight’s game is goin’ to go.

BILLY looks at PERKINS and then looks down.

PERKINS: Billy, just a simple question. You have nothing to lose by answering it. It is obvious that I can’t hold you to any answer because no one can see the future. (Billy still doesn’t answer) Okay, let me rephrase the question. What do you think of that young pitcher the Cubs’ll be throwin’ at you tonight?

BILLY continues to look at the ground and not say anything. Some other ballplayers enter right to warm up before the game and PERKINS moves to the group and begins talking to them. POP leaves his office and sits down on the bench beside BILLY.

POP: Hi ya, Billy.

BILLY: Hi Pop. Perkins was just here. I didn’t say a thing to him. You know, Pop, I know Mr. Henderson wants us to talk to the press and all to build up the ball club, but, you know, that bloodsucker can take the most innocent comment and turn it into a statement of treason or something. I just don’t like him. I’ve been thinking. About everything, you know. I can’t remember when I haven’t been playing ball. Baseball is so much a part of me that even thinking about not putting on the uniform and running out into the field and being with the guys and competing in a way that I understand and can do well and . . . . Are you getting what I’m trying to say?

POP: Billy, as far as I’m concerned, you’ll be in the lineup tonight and tomorrow night and the night after that. You are almost a national treasure. We can’t live without you.

BILLY: No, Pop, that’s not it. Our priest was talking about ashes to ashes and dust to dust and that sort of thing a couple of Sundays ago and then I sit here at the ballpark and I look down and there’s all this dust. I wonder how Joe Jackson felt when he couldn’t play ball any more. Maybe it was like being dead. I wonder if he is in the dust right here and never had to leave the ballpark. He just stayed here forever. You and me, Pop, we’re getting on and maybe we’re near the end. I guess you think of things like that when you can’t do the things you used to be able to do so easily. You know what I’m talking about, Pop. You have to know what it’s like. To be near the end. This is a time we all know
will happen, but pray it never will. How can I bow out gracefully? Do you think I can? Now? I still have more to do.

POP: Billy . . .

BILLY: No, Pop, just listen to me. Steven’s going to be up here soon. He’s tearing up Triple A and you and Mr. Henderson are desperate to win games. Just let me hang on long enough to play with Steven. You know that’s all I got left to do. I’ve done everything else baseball could ask of me. I don’t care about the Hall of Fame. Just let me play one game with my boy. That’s all I ask. And then maybe I can gracefully disappear into wherever old ballplayers go. Maybe I’ve lasted longer than I should’ve . . .

POP:  Billy . . . . You’re just in a slump. It’ll come back. You know that. Don’t listen to Perkins. I’m the manager, not him. I’ve seen as many ballplayers come and go as you have. Don’t doubt yourself. You know you’ll get it back.

Lights go down upstage and come up downstage left on the Shaw’s kitchen. BETH is in the kitchen when STEVEN and ALEXIS enter left.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low

STEVEN: Mom. Mom. I want you to meet someone.

BETH: Steven, how good to see you. What? Do you have an off day? Hmmm, who is this you have with you?

STEVEN: Yes, mom, we’re off today. Umm, this is Alexis Perkins and I’ve brought her along to taste some of your world famous cuisine.

BETH: Ohhh, you drag her all of the way up here from Lexington just to save paying for a restaurant. Not that I mind, but Steven . . . .

STEVEN (laughing): Okay, you’ve found me out. I brought her along to meet you. But don’t you think that I haven’t thought about how eating one of your meals will make me look better.

BETH (obviously pleased): Well, then, I’m not making anything special tonight and it will be awhile because your father’s game is just beginning. Well, Alexis, do you live in Lexington?

ALEXIS: No, Mrs. Shaw, I live here in Louisville, but I work in Lexington.
BETH: Isn’t that kind of far to go to work?

ALEXIS: No, not really. It’s about forty minutes by train and my grandparents live in Lexington and so I stay with them at times. It works out.

BETH: Well, never mind, I’m just so glad to meet some of the people Steven knows down there in Lexington. I don’t get to see him as much as I would like, you know. Well, if you two would like to go on into the living room and relax, that would be alright. I’ll just stay here and fiddle around a bit and listen to the game on the radio.

STEVEN: Actually, I think we would like to simply stay here with you and listen to the game. It would give you and Alexis a chance to get to know each other better.

BETH: Oh (a slight grin as she looks at STEVEN), okay. (Still looking at STEVEN) Alexis, why don’t you sit here next to me so that we can get to know each other better?

STEVEN and ALEXIS sit with BETH, and the three pantomime talking. STEVEN, however, spends most of his time listening to the game while the women chat. Lights dim downstage and come up upstage where a ballgame is taking place.

SOUND CUE: let the game continue to play for about 15-30 seconds after BETH’s line and then fade out.

ANNOUNCER: It’s been quite a ballgame, folks. The Cubs took an early three run lead on a tape measure homer by Kingman, but the Colonels have been able to scratch out a couple of runs and get within one. Here in the bottom of the ninth, Clete Thomas steps up the plate. A couple of quick swings through the strike zone and he’s ready. Sutter delivers and Thomas fouls it straight back to the screen. Sutter’s got that knuckle-curve and when he has it working, it’s almost unhittable. Sutter steps back off of the mound, looks around at the runners, and steps back up on the rubber. And the pitch. Aw, no. Thomas pops it straight up in the infield, Huggins pulls it in, and there are two outs. All it would have taken was a fly ball to the outfield to tie the game. Thomas couldn’t get the run home. That seems to be the way things have been going during this losing streak. The Colonels still have two runners in scoring position and Billy Shaw is stepping up to the plate. He pinwheels his bat with his famous warm-up and digs his cleats into the clay around home plate. Aw, there’s a strike on the inside corner. Billy didn’t even seem to see the pitch. The score is three to two and there are two outs, but the Colonels have runners on second and third and the venerable Billy Shaw at the bat. Just a base hit wins it. The cat and mouse game gets interesting when you have two veterans like Shaw and Sutter facing one another. Sutter looks in and winds. Here’s the pitch, it’s up and away
for a ball. That evens the count at one-and-one. Shaw steps out a moment. He taps his bat on his cleats. Now he steps back in. And the pitch. Low and away for ball two. It looks like Sutter is trying to set Billy up for an inside pitch. Trying to get him to lean out over the plate and then bust him inside where he can’t reach it. But he has to know that Billy Shaw’s been around too long to fall for that. Nope, there’s a cutter that Billy fouls off into the stands behind first base. Two and two. Shaw steps out and spends a moment contemplating the flags that are whipping out to left center out over the right field stands. Okay, now he’s back in the box. Sutter takes a deep breath, he steps on the rubber, and he winds and deals. Shaw turns the pitch around and smacks a line drive into left field. The ball’s going to split the outfielders and go all the way to the wall. Henderson scores, Dibble rounds third, touches home plate without a throw and the Colonels pull off a magical victory on a walk-off base hit by Billy Shaw. Oh no, wait a minute. Shaw is slumped over just past first base. This looks bad. The trainer is out. They’re helping Shaw back to the bench. He’s limping badly. I’ll see if I can find out what has happened while we cut for a station break.

POP and the TRAINER help BILLY to the bench. Through all of this the SPECTATORS initially cheer, but then become concerned as it becomes obvious that BILLY has injured himself.

POP: Billy, you okay? What’s wrong?

BILLY (in obvious pain): Aw, Pop, it’s the hamstring again. I guess it’s the penalty for living too long.

SPECTATOR #1: Hey, Shaw, maybe now you’ll hang ‘em up and let someone who can still play get on the field.

SPECTATOR #4: Billy, we’re behind you. (He turns to another SPECTATOR) Aw, I hope it’s not bad. (He looks at SPECTATOR #1) The Colonels won’t be the same team without Billy Shaw.

SPECTATOR #1: Yea, the team might start winning some games without Shaw in the lineup.

POP looks at the trainer.

POP: Get him into the clubhouse and see what you can do about that leg! (POP buries his face in his hands as the trainer helps BILLY off right.)
SPECTATOR #2: Hey, Pop, maybe now the Colonels won’t watch Shaw strike out all the time.

SPECTATOR #5: (Turning to SPECTATOR #2) Maybe now you’ll find out how important Billy Shaw is to the Colonels.

(Pop leaves the bench and goes into his office)

SPECTATOR #1: Yea, now maybe the Colonels can win some games because Billy Shaw won’t be leaving men stranded in scoring position.

SPECTATOR #4: Billy’s our best player.

SPECTATOR #2: Yea, best at striking out.

SPECTATOR #1: You’ll see that Perkins is right when the Colonels bring up someone from Lexington and he makes Billy Shaw look sick.

SPECTATOR #5: Never happen. The team will just tread water until Billy Shaw gets back. Unless …

SPECTATOR #4: Yea, they bring Billy’s boy up. I can’t wait to see him play with all we’ve heard about him.

Pop walks to his office and begins to shuffle some papers. SOUND CUE: He turns on the radio and some music from the 1950s era begins to play as the lights dim upstage and come up down right. BILLY follows a short time later using a cane. SOUND CUE: The sound of the radio continues to play, but it is very low.

BILLY: Well, Pop, they’ve put me on the 15-day DL with a strained hamstring. Doc says at my age it’ll take a couple of weeks to heal. Damn, I hate this. All I can do is sit at home and watch the Mickey Mouse Club on TV. You know, Pop, if I can’t be out there playing ball, I might as well be dead. This injury stuff is killing me. (He sits) You have any idea of who they’re going to bring up to take my roster spot?

POP: As matter of fact, Billy, I do. (He smiles) I just got off the phone with the GM and he says it’s going to be Steven. They’re calling Lexington right now. And you take it easy. The break’s coming up soon and that’ll give you an extra chance to heal so we have you for the stretch run.
BILLY (Hardly able to contain his pleasure at the news and not hearing anything Pop says after the news that STEVEN is being called up.): You know, Pop, Lexington was off today. I’ll bet he’s home right now. Would it be alright if I gave him the news?

POP: No problem, Billy. Just be sure he’s here for tomorrow’s game.

BILLY: I’m on my way.

(JIMMY enters)

BILLY: Hi, Jimmy. How are you? Hey, I want to thank you for getting my back with that torn uniform. When it comes to sewing, I’m all thumbs. You don’t know how much I appreciate your help.

JIMMY: No problem, Mr. Shaw. It’s my job.

(BILLY stands and begins to exit the office)

POP: See ya tomorrow, Billy. Oh, and Billy, by the way, that was a nice piece of hitting to win the ballgame tonight. Sutter’s breaking pitch is nasty and you stayed with him all of the way.

BILLY: Thanks Pop. I’ll see you tomorrow with Steven in tow. See you, Jimmy. And thanks again.

(BILLY exits)

POP: Jimmy, I’m glad you’re here. Look, I need you to get the clubhouse in good shape for the Cardinals. We don’t want them to tell everyone around the league what slobs we are.

JIMMY: No problem, Pop. I’ll get on it as soon as I get your office straightened up.

POP: (looking at the door) Jimmy, I’m worried about Billy. I’ll tell you, if he had one iota less talent than he has, the newspapers would have crushed him long ago. The man is just too sensitive for this business. He can’t seem to let anything go. For goodness sake, Jimmy, he overanalyzes everything. That’s probably why he is the greatest ballplayer who ever lived, and may ever be. Not only that, but he’s one of the finest human beings I’ve ever met. He actually cares about the fans, the guys on the club, their families. A man can’t take everything on his shoulders and bear up under it all.
JIMMY: You’re right, Pop. I’ve not been here for years like you and Mr. Shaw, but I see what you mean. Mr. Shaw always seems to care whether I’m doing well or not. He always treats me as though I’m just as important to the team as the players. I guess that’s what makes me so mad about Perkins. He’s picked out the one player who would really care about what he writes and picks at him. How does Perkins think that will make the Colonels better?

POP: I doubt if Perkins even thinks about what goes on inside the clubhouse and the players. He only wants people to read his columns. He doesn’t even give good reasons why he writes the things he does; he just writes them and some of those morons believe they’re true just because he writes them. It’s kind of like he has a “divine right” to write the half-truths and outright lies he does and there are those who seem to think that it is almost immoral to disagree with him.

JIMMY: Some people don’t like what he writes.

POP: And I’m glad of it. That’s the only thing that makes my job tolerable; the fact that there are those fans who actually think about what is happening here. I’m aware that this is just baseball and people may not live or die because of what happens on the field, but damn it, Jimmy, baseball is important on a number of levels.

SOUND CUE: Music off

Lights dim down right and come up down left as BILLY is entering the kitchen.

BETH: Billy, are you alright! We heard on the radio that something happened.

STEVEN: Dad! What happened? How bad is it?

BILLY: Nothing to it. I just tweaked my hammy a little. Doc says I’ll be as good as new in a couple of weeks.

STEVEN: Yea, and the All-Star break is coming up and that’ll help. You know, Dad, while you’re off, you might be able to come down to Lexington a couple of times and root me on. It would be great to have you see me play.

BILLY: Better than that. How about I watch you play here in Louisville?

STEVEN (getting the gist of what BILLY is trying to say): You mean I’ve been called up! Aw, Dad, I hate that you had to get hurt for it to happen, but this is great!
BILLY: Don’t worry about it, Steven. You’ll play so well they can’t send you back down and I’ll come off the DL and it’ll be just like we’ve always dreamed. Father and son leading the Colonials on to victory! (BILLY just then notices ALEXIS sitting in the background) Oh, and who is this? (He looks at BETH in mock horror) Have I a daughter you’ve been keeping from me all these years?

BETH and STEVEN chuckle as STEVEN brings ALEXIS up to BILLY.

STEVEN: Dad, I’d like for you to meet Alexis.

BILLY: Alexis. Hmm, such a pretty name. And such a lovely young lady. You from Lexington?

ALEXIS: No, not actually, Mr. Shaw. I’m from Louisville and just work in Lexington at the Lexington Courier. I work in the editorial department. (She laughs) And to answer your question, it’s only about 40 minutes by train from Louisville to Lexington and my grandparents live in Lexington and so I have a place to stay when I’m working late.

BILLY (Looking at STEVEN): I hope I’m not jumping the gun here, but how long has this been going on?

STEVEN: Since the beginning of last season. Her dad and she came down to watch the first few games of the season and . . . .

BILLY: First few and that was all? Just exactly who is your father? Do I know him?

ALEXIS: He’s Ezra Perkins. Mr. Shaw, I know you and he have had problems, but he is my father.

BILLY: Good for you! (He looks at STEVEN) I like a person who can stand up for themselves. It shows character. Well, mother, I guess I’d better get this leg elevated. That’s what the doc said to do.

BILLY and BETH exit left.

ALEXIS: Oh, Steven, do you think he likes me! It’s so important that he likes me!

STEVEN: I’m sure he does. My dad’s fair-minded. He’ll give anyone an even break. Especially someone I like. Not only that, but he just made it clear that what your father writes about him has nothing to do with you.
ALEXIS: I hope so. Well, Steven, you ready to take me home?

STEVEN: You bet, come on.

STEVEN and ALEXIS exit left. Lights dim down left and come up down right. POP is seen in his office doing paperwork.

STEVEN and BILLY enter left into the kitchen and continue through the kitchen door and to POP’s office. BILLY knocks on POP’S office door. As soon as STEVEN and BILLY enter POP’s office, several ballplayers come out onto the field and begin to warm up.

SOUND CUE: When backstage tells you that the players are in position. KNOCK.

POP: Hm, yea. Who is it?

BILLY: It’s Steven and I, Pop.

STEVEN and BILLY enter POP’s office. When they are in the office, POP stands up and comes around the desk with his hand outstretched.

POP: Steven Shaw. I can remember when you were about a foot tall and getting underfoot in the clubhouse. Yea, you were quite the dickens. And now you’re here. You were hitting, what, .366 down in Lexington?

STEVEN: Yes, sir, Mr. Jackson.

POP: Oh, don’t call me Mr. Jackson. That was my dad. I’m just Pop. Just call me Pop. Well, you ready to play tonight? I’ve been working on the line-up and I’ve got you penciled in batting fourth - if you think you can handle it.

STEVEN (unable to contain a grin): You betcha, Mr. Jackson, er... Pop. I’ll be ready and hopefully I can help the ball club.

POP: Well, you’d better get down to the field and start getting loose.

STEVEN: You bet, Mr. Jackson.

STEVEN leaves POP’s office and moves to the ball field where he begins to warm up with the other players.
BILLY: Thanks, Pop, it means a lot to him to see you have so much confidence in him.

POP: Billy, let me put it as plain as I can. I am here to win ballgames and sentiment has nothing to do with anything I do. If I didn’t think batting Steven fourth would give us the best chance to win, he wouldn’t be there.

BILLY: Regardless of what Perkins writes?

POP: You know me well enough to know that what that vulture says has no influence on what I do.

BILLY: Well, I’d better get down the field. See you in about an hour.

BILLY leaves POP’s office and moves to the ball field as the lights dim down right and come up upstage.

POP shuffles some papers and leaves his office and moves to the bench. Ballplayers move into position and the ANNOUNCER begins. BETH is sitting in the kitchen listening to the radio.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low. Fade after about 15-30 seconds

ANNOUNCER: What a beautiful night for baseball! And the Colonels agree. They lead five to one here in the seventh and the player they just brought up from Lexington, Steven Shaw, has gone three for three and has knocked in four of the five runs. Quite a debut for the young man. And it should be, his father is living legend, Billy Shaw. Steven’s batting in the hole this inning right behind Groat and Mazeroski. Bill Groat steps in facing Henry Stone. Stone’s first offering dips low and is a bit outside. Ball one. Groat’s one for two today with a double and he’s scored one of runs that Steven’s knocked in. Groat takes a deep breath and steps back in. Stone fires another fastball that is almost a carbon copy of the first pitch. That’s ball two. There’s no reason for Groat to be fishing here with the count in his favor and a four run lead. The pitch had better be to his liking. Stone winds his arms over his head and sends a pitch to the plate. It’s a line shot into left field. Skinner fields the ball and fires it into second and Groat, who had rounded first, scampers back to the bag. That’ll bring Dick Mazeroski to the dish. He’s walked and singled and has scored twice ahead of Steven Shaw. Stone checks Groat on first. He throws over and Groat steps back to the bag. I think that was just a courtesy toss to let Groat know that he’s aware that Groat is over there. He looks in at Mazeroski, reaches back and fires a curve ball that catches the inside corner. I don’t think that Maz was expecting that because Stone has been working away to almost every batter. Well, it takes three to punch him out and that’s only one. I doubt if Maz will be fooled again.
And the pitch. This time the curve came too far inside and it’s ball one. Mazeroski steps out of the box, looks down at the third base coach for a sign, takes a couple of practice swings, a deep breath, and steps back in. Stone kicks at the rubber. Now he rocks and fires and it rides high for ball two. I’m sure that Stone is aware that Steven Shaw is waiting on deck. He likely wants to set Mazeroski up for a sinker so that he has a chance at a double play so Shaw will come to the plate with nobody on. All right, everyone’s ready. Groat’s leading off of first, Mazeroski’s digging in at the plate, and Stone winds and delivers. Maz slaps a slow roller to short, Wills flips to Sandberg, but the ball was hit so slowly that’s all they can get. And here comes Steven Shaw. Just listen to those fans. Shaw has quickly become a fan favorite here in Louisville. Oh, well, he comes to bat for the fourth time tonight with one out and a runner on first. Stone looks in for the sign, winds and delivers . . . and Shaw strikes a long drive, deep left field, it’s going, going . . . Open the bedroom window, Aunt Minnie, ‘cause here it comes. A home run for Steven Shaw. What a first night in the major leagues for Billy Shaw’s boy!

**SOUND CUE:** ballgame very low

**SPECTATOR #3:** Way to go, Steven!

**SPECTATOR #1:** Now the Colonels are goin’ to win!

ALEXIS and PERKINS are sitting in the bleachers while the ballplayers are congratulating STEVEN.

**PERKINS:** Well, I guess that’s it for Billy Shaw. The torch has been passed.

ALEXIS: What do you mean, Dad? Mr. Shaw’s just on the disabled list. And he’ll be back just as strong as ever.

**PERKINS:** Oh, so it’s Mr. Shaw now. Well, he’s just an old dinosaur. He should have been extinct with the rest of them long ago, but he keeps hanging on wrecking the game.

ALEXIS: Daddy! He still plays as well as the best of them and better than most! What do you have against him? And not only that, but what do you have against Steven? From what you wrote in yesterday’s paper you’d think he couldn’t play Little League!

**PERKINS:** Ahhh, so you’ve lost some of your objectivity when you started seeing the young Shaw boy. Well, I’ll tell you, it looks like he’s got a bright future, but the old man, he’s done.

**ALEXIS:** Now you just wait a minute! He has a bright future . . . But you wrote . . .
PERKINS: And I meant every word I wrote. He just a promising Triple A player now, but let him have some seasoning and he may turn out to be something . . . as a ball player. I’ve seen too many of these phenoms flame out and end up on the street trying to use their past to get by. Just like his old man will be doing pretty soon.

ALEXIS: You just wait, Billy Shaw will show you.

PERKINS: Just be objective. That’s what you have to do in the newspaper game. Don’t let a little thing like being sweet on his boy sway you.

ALEXIS (angrily): You are horrible! Steven and I are serious and this may turn out to be more than you expect and you may be related to Billy Shaw and then what will you do!

PERKINS: Ahhh, just a bit of infatuation, that’s all. Don’t get your hopes up too high, you both are too young and ballplayers . . . well, they’ve always been a bit unreliable.

ALEXIS: (Take a long look at PERKINS) Now to look at it, your lampooning of Mr. Shaw started almost exactly the same time that I started seeing Steven. Does . . .

PERKINS: Don’t you question what I do, young lady. I know you better than you know yourself and a ballplayer is not now and never will be right for you.

ALEXIS looks at her father for a moment and then crosses to the Shaw’s kitchen. Lights dim upstage and come up down left on the Shaw kitchen.

ALEXIS (SOUND CUE: knocking on the kitchen door): Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Shaw. It’s Alexis. May I come in?

BETH enters left into kitchen

BETH: Yes, yes, Alexis. What a pleasant surprise! Where’s Steven? (BETH looks at ALEXIS’s face) Oh, what’s wrong?

ALEXIS: It’s my father. I doubt if he knows that he upset me. He can be just so – dense – at times. He and I had a little spat about Mr. Shaw and Steven, and – I’m so sorry – but, I didn’t know where else to go and I had to talk to someone.

BETH: Alexis, of course, you can come and talk to me anytime you like. During the time that has passed since Steven brought you here for dinner, I think the two of us have
gotten to know each other rather well and, to tell you the truth, I’ve grown to be quite fond of you. And honestly, I must tell you that I am very pleased that a wonderful girl like you and my son Steven have gotten together. I can’t tell you how happy I am that Steven was able to find someone like you. Please believe me, I will always be there to support you. I know that sometimes men just don’t get it and you need a little bit of mothering.

ALEXIS: You know - Mother Shaw - that sounds nice.

BETH (Looks surprised at what ALEXIS has just said and goes to ALEXIS and puts her arm around ALEXIS): There isn’t anything you and Steven aren’t telling me and Billy, is there? Like maybe a date?

ALEXIS (smiling back): No, not yet. No, not yet. But if there is, I’ll have a model to be an incredible mother.

BETH: My dear, you’ll do just fine.

ALEXIS: I hope so . . . . I really care for Steven. I don’t know. With my father being so unreasonable . . . .

BETH: That has nothing to do with anything. Steven is wise enough to separate the issues and so is Billy. And if I’m getting the signals right from you and Steven, I’m going to have a wonderful daughter who is going to give me some fine grandchildren.

ALEXIS: (smiling) Maybe . . . But . . . Steven has to ask.

BETH: (laughing) It might take a while. Steven is just like Billy and when Billy was trying to get up the nerve to ask me – well, I had to help the situation along a little. It was after the last game of the 1929 World Series and . . . .

Lights dim down stage left and come up down right on POP’s office. POP is sitting behind his desk and SOUND CUE: BILLY and STEVEN knock on his office door. While the three are talking, ballplayers move upstage and begin warming up.


BILLY: You know I’m scheduled to come off the DL in a couple of days. I’ll tell you, being on the DL for six weeks has just about taken every bit of patience I have. I can’t
stand to watch the Colonels play without me being out there with them. Hmmm. You called me in to tell me I coming off the DL?

POP: Yea, in a couple of days. I just want to have the trainer check your leg out and make sure it is a hundred and ten percent ready. It won’t do us any good if we rush it and you end up on the DL again. You’re probably coming off in time for the Giant series.

BILLY (hesitantly): And do you know who’s going down?

POP (chuckling): I figured that would be your next question and that’s why I asked you to bring Steven along.

BILLY and STEVEN look at each other tensely

POP: It won’t be Steven. We decided to go with an eleven man pitching staff for a while to make sure that all of the pitchers get enough work. Our starters have been pitching so well that we’ve got a couple of guys down there in the pen who haven’t been on the mound for eight – ten days. They need to get some work and in the minors, they’ll pitch. Not only that, but Steven has proved that he doesn’t need the minors any more. Steven’ll stay.

BILLY and STEVEN are clearly pleased.

POP: The big reason I called both of you in here was to let you know that we’re going to move our outfielders around a bit. Steven, you’re going to move from center to right. Center’s your dad’s position and he’s going to keep it regardless of how well you’ve been playing. Any complaints?

STEVEN: Not a chance, Mr. Jackson, er . . . I mean, Pop.

POP: Great.

BILLY: (with his arm around STEVEN) This is my dream, Pop. This is all I have left to do. After this season, as hard as it will be, I can leave knowing that all of my hopes and dreams will have happened. (Looks at STEVEN with a proud smile on his face) I will know that no matter what happens, my legacy is taken care of.

POP: (with a smile) We can worry about that after we win the pennant. We still have a lot of work left in front of us. The Pirates aren’t going away. They have a great ball club.
BILLY: We’ll do it, Pop. Steven and I. We’re going to do it. How can it be any other way? One more pennant for me and then it’ll be up to Steven to win pennants after that.

POP: We’ll leave next year’s pennant for next year. We’ve got today’s game to worry about. Now c’mon, we’ve got a game to win.

Lights dim down right and come up upstage. POP, BILLY, and STEVEN leave POP’s office and move upstage. SPECTATORS fill the seats. BETH and ALEXIS move to the radio in the SHAW kitchen. BETH turns on the radio.

ANNOUNCER: Here we are. Another great night for baseball. The Colonels have scratched and clawed their way into second place, just one and a half games behind the Pirates. A win tonight and a loss for Pittsburgh would even the loss column and the Pirates are facing Ryan for New York tonight and he’s become almost unhittable. It looks like the Colonels’ fate is in their own hands. And the Colonels are starting Randy Tomlinson in his major league debut tonight. I’ll tell you, though, if he pitches like he did at Lexington, he’ll do just fine. He was lights out in Triple A. Well, here we go. Jimmy Jakes, lead off hitter for the Braves is stepping into the box and Tomlinson looks in for the sign. He’s got to be feeling some nerves pitching for the Colonels. These boys work toward this all their lives. And here’s the pitch. Jakes is first ball hitting and swats a sinking liner into center. Steven Shaw races in, dives and he’s got it! What a great play! You know, the word on the wire is that Steven’s dad, Billy, will be back off the DL for the Giant series. It’ll be interesting to see what the front office will do about the roster spot. Will they send Steven down? It will be hard. He’s been hitting the cover off of the ball. In fact, he’s been almost carrying the team for the last three or four weeks. Well, with one out, Spikes, the second baseman for the Braves, steps in. Boy, I’ll tell you, Tomlinson sure doesn’t waste any time out there. He gets the ball and fires it right back. I guess he’s got a hot date tonight and doesn’t want to be late. Here’s the 2-1 pitch and it’s fouled straight back. . .

Lights dim upstage and come up down left. BETH and ALEXIS are sitting in the SHAW’s kitchen listening to the radio.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low

BETH: It looks like Steven has won a place on the team. You can’t imagine how pleased I am.

ALEXIS (smiling): Sure does. I’m so happy for him. He’s worked so hard for this. It looks like the torch will be passed for certain. You know, Mr. Shaw has been able to pass on his legacy. Baseball will have a Shaw for another generation.
BETH: You know, Alexis, you’re right. I just wish Billy would just give it up. We don’t need the money. We have more than enough to last us forever and plenty left over for the grandchildren. And now Stephen is in the Major Leagues and it looks like he’ll be there for a long time. There is no reason for Billy to hang on. It is so hard for me to hold him up when he struggles and he struggles more and more as the years go by.

ALEXIS: Mrs. Shaw, Mr. Shaw is still playing well. He can still cover center field and no runners try to run on him. He’s still hitting and driving in runners. He’s still helping the team.

BETH: But, Alexis, he has nothing left to prove. Why keep on struggling and having to tape yourself up and take therapy every night and live with aches and pains and cry out in agony every time you move if you don’t have to?

ALEXIS: Mrs. Shaw, I watch Steven and Mr. Shaw every chance I get. I watch Steven and I know that he belongs on the ball field. There is a rhythm, a pace, a passion that exists between the game and Steven. He fits in on the field in a way that it is obvious that his very life can’t continue unless he is a part of it. I can see the same thing with Mr. Shaw. He just doesn’t seem to be as frantic as Steven. He fits into the flow of it all so perfectly that everything that happens on the field is part of him. Mr. Shaw has an understanding of baseball that is clear to him in a way that I doubt if I ever will be able to understand and I’m sure Steven will be the same way someday and I’ll still not completely understand. It’s almost like Mr. Shaw and Steven were born to baseball and baseball is a necessary part of them like breathing and if they lose baseball, they’ll have nothing else . . . I’m not sure any of that made any sense, but that’s the way I feel.

BETH: Dear, all of it makes sense, but I’m too close to it all. I love Billy with all of my heart and the sight of him suffering in the way he does hurts me more than I can say.

ALEXIS: I think I understand what you mean completely. I feel the same way about Steven. When he doesn’t do well, it hurts me so much. I know he’s disappointed in himself and I want him to succeed so badly that it cuts me deep down. Mrs. Shaw . . . I love Steven and I want to be a part of his life. But there is that part of his life I don’t understand.

BETH: I remember. When Billy and I first started dating . . . you know . . . when I got to know him better, I felt the same way . . . but the thing was . . . that he played so well that his team could depend upon him. It always seemed that when the team really needed it, Billy always came through. Now, though, sometimes the team fails because Billy can’t come through the way he used to and the pain he feels when he lets them down . . . oh, it
hurts. Oh, I wish he would quit so badly sometimes, but I’m afraid of what not playing ball will do to him. It’s so hard when people get to this point.

The two women’s attention is pulled to the radio. The lights fade slightly on the kitchen and come up on the ball field.

**SOUND CUE: ballgame off**

ANNOUNCER: What a great ballgame we are seeing. This game has had everything but scoring. Great pitching. Tremendous fielding plays. All around excitement. Well, it’s the bottom of the sixth and Willie Harrison steps into the box. He’s oh for two with a strike out and a pop-up. Hardly reason for optimism. Ryan looks in for the sign, swings into the windup and fires a fastball right down the middle and Harrison just watches it go by. Harrison steps out and takes a couple of practice swings. Now he’s back in. Ryan peers from under his cap, reaches back and fires. Just a little low. That evens the count at one and one. Harrison steps out and takes a deep breath. He steps back in and Ryan steps up onto the rubber and pitches and there’s a weak ground ball to short, on to first and Harrison’s out. Now Steven Shaw steps in. Ryan’s been pitching a dandy. Not a base runner for the Colonels yet. But Tomlinson has been matching him pitch for pitch and we’re still scoreless. I’ll tell you, Tomlinson’s been a real find for the Colonels. Give him a couple of years and he’ll be at least a top of the rotation starter, if not the ace of the staff. Ryan rocks and delivers and the pitch drops down low and the count moves in Shaw’s favor two and oh. Steven Shaw has been tearing the cover off of the ball the last six weeks and with a few more at bats, he’ll have enough at bats to qualify and could be leading the league in batting average. And the two – oh pitch, Shaw swings and sends a sinking line drive down the right field line, the ball skips into the corner, and bounces away from the right fielder. Shaw is rounding second and is headed for third, the throw’s on the money – the slide, safe! He slid under the tag.

BETH: Way to go, Steven!

ALEXIS: A convincing way to break up the no-hitter!

ANNOUNCER: A runner at third, no one out, and Jacob Wilson at the plate. Ryan rocks and fires and Wilson smacks a hard grounder to third. Robinson freezes Shaw at third and guns the ball to first.

BETH: That’s exactly what I’ve been trying to say. What if that were Billy who didn’t get the runner home? He’d be crushed!
Lights dim down left and come up down right. The two women pantomime talking in the Shaw kitchen.

POP wearily walks into his office and sits just as wearily down behind his desk. BILLY follows a few moments later.

BILLY: Tough loss, Pop. I thought when Steven hit that triple to lead off the sixth, we were on our way. Pittsburgh lost today and so we’re still a game and a half game out of first. Ah, man, we’d be right on them if we could have pulled this one out.

POP: Billy, if I’d had you there in the eighth to hit for Johnson . . . Oh, never mind. I’ve had this conversation with myself every time we’ve lost a game. Damn, I hate to lose.

BILLY: That’s why you’re a great manager. You try to play all of the angles to pull out the game. Well, I’ll be back off the DL in a couple of days and I hope that does the trick. You know, Pop, I pray that I can live up to what you expect. I can’t just throw my glove out on the field and get a base hit or make a running catch any more. Ah, Pop, maybe I’m letting Perkins get to me.

POP: Ah, Billy, why do you read that drivel? Perkins hasn’t had anything nice to say about any of us since he starting writing for that rag. And believe me; I know it’s hard to not take some of that rot to heart. Do me a favor and just stop reading The Press and don’t pay attention to anyone who tries to talk to you about it.

BILLY (smiling): Okay, Pop. Let’s get out there with the guys so they don’t think we’re talking about them.

INTERMISSION

Lights dim down right and come up down left over the SHAW’s kitchen. BILLY leaves POP’s office and crosses to the SHAW’s kitchen and enters.

BETH: Billy, tough loss.

BILLY: Yea. I’m proud of Steven, but it just isn’t the same if you lose.

BILLY sits dejectedly.

BETH: When do you come off the DL?

BILLY: In a couple of days when the Giants come to town.
BETH: Tuesday?

BILLY: Yea.

BETH: How are you feeling about coming back?

BILLY: I can’t wait.

BETH: Billy, it hurts me to see you like this.

BILLY: I’ll be back in a couple of days and then I’ll be okay.

BETH: It’s not that, Billy. The last couple of years have been hard. Billy, the frustration you bring home after a game when you haven’t played well hurts me more than you. You seem to be able to let it go and go into the next game with a clean slate. I carry this stuff with me and it builds up inside until I want to scream. Billy, why do you think I never come to the ballpark?

BILLY just sits and looks at BETH

BETH: It’s because I can’t stand to hear those fans scream at you. I can’t stand to watch the way the fans treat you. I can’t stand to see you after you fail. I do have to listen to the games on the radio because I love you, but I can’t go to the ballpark anymore.

BILLY looks down.

BETH: Billy, you’re just too damn old, don’t you get it! They’re laughing at you. When you were 12, everyone in the town was amazed at how you could play better than the high school boys. When you were 22, everyone in the country was amazed at how a rookie could make the established ball players look like they didn’t know what they were doing. At 32, you were the All-Star with a sure ticket to Cooperstown. At 42, every paper in the country wrote about how you were still playing at an All-Star level when most players were washed up. But for good God, Billy, you’re 52 years old and you don’t get it any more. You’ve always got to have one more mountain to climb. What is it this time? 800 homeruns to outdo Babe Ruth? You don’t even tell me anymore. Oh, Billy, I feel so left out at times. Our lives have been buried by your insane desire to always achieve one more thing. If you can only do one more thing, then you can walk away. Billy, I love you so much. Don’t ruin it all with this crazy desire to always out achieve everyone. Can’t you see it? Those smart-aleck kids who are just coming up from the minors look at you and say “He ain’t much no more. Heck, he probably never
was good. Just a bunch of stories from when all the good players were doin’ somethin’
else.” Hang up the spikes, Billy. If you can’t do it for your own pride, do it for mine. I
can’t stand to see them laugh any more.

BILLY: I can’t, Beth. All I know is that if I give up too soon, my heart’ll break. I don’t
ever want to look back and say to myself – I wish I never gave up while I could still play.
Ah, Beth, the only thing I love more than baseball is you. God, Beth - I love baseball.

BETH: Yes, Billy, I know. I suppose that’s all that’s all that’s keepin’ you going. If it
weren’t for baseball in your heart, you would probably would have gone on by now.
But, Billy, remember, I don’t love baseball, I love you.

BILLY: I know, Beth. Let me finish out this season and I promise I will give retiring
serious thought.

They embrace and kiss.

BILLY leaves the kitchen

BETH turns on the radio.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low

Lights dim down left and come up upstage.

A ballgame is in progress. ALEXIS and PERKINS are sitting in the stands along with
other spectators.

PERKINS: Well, it looks like Fossil Shaw’ll be back tomorrow.

ALEXIS: I’m looking forward to it, Daddy. Don’t you realize that we’re seeing a
ballplayer who will be a legend and we have had the chance to see him play.

PERKINS: A legend? Pfft, he was a legend 10 years ago. Now, he’s just an old man
trying to play a game that he should be watching.

ALEXIS: Daddy, what do you have against Billy Shaw! He has never said anything to
you that has been negative, he has never said anything rude, he has never said anything
crude, he has never said . . . .
PERKINS: You wait just a minute there, young lady! I make my livelihood off of men like him and he has none of my respect simply because he’s trying to milk the system. He is living off of a name that hasn’t meant anything for years and now he’s trying to use that name to create a place for his son who couldn’t keep up with Class D players!

ALEXIS: I will not stay here and listen to this! Anyone watching this game knows that Steven Shaw has as much talent as his father and will carry on his legacy!

PERKINS: Yea... Legacy! A legacy of what! A legacy of being a leech! A legacy of being a hanger-on and destroying what might have been a great legacy. Billy Shaw will get into the Hall of Fame, but it’s only because of what he did ten – twenty years ago, not since then. And his son, I can destroy Steven just like this. (PERKINS snaps his fingers.) His career depends upon me and I can take it away from him in a moment. Ballplayers are scum. They add nothing to our lives and take everything they have.

ALEXIS: Father! Why are you saying these things! Please stop! The father who raised me wouldn’t say things like this! I can’t listen any more!

PERKINS: Yes, you can. You’re my daughter and you will listen to anything I say. I will not have you cavorting around with a ballplayer. Now sit down and watch the game. It’s about to start.

ALEXIS: No. I’m leaving. I’m going to Lexington! And if he’ll have me, I will marry Steven Shaw!

PERKINS: You get back here! You’re not going anywhere! (ALEXIS pauses and looks back at PERKINS) Alexis, if you leave now, don’t you ever show your face at my door again!

ALEXIS leaves the grandstands and moves down left to the SHAW’s kitchen. Lights dim upstage and come up down left. BETH is in the kitchen tuning the radio to pick up the ballgame. ALEXIS just walks into the kitchen without knocking, sobbing. After a few moments, the game comes on in the background.

BETH: Why, Alexis, what is wrong?

ALEXIS: I’ve just had a fight with my father. I just don’t understand. I don’t know him any more. Mrs. Shaw, I can’t stay with him any longer. I just don’t know where to go.

BETH: Alexis, you know you are welcome here, but don’t you think there is some middle ground you could find with you father?
ALEXIS: No, Mrs. Shaw. I’ve been dealing with this long enough. I am going to Lexington and find an apartment there.

BETH: Alexis, now, now. Calm down. Things will seem much better in the morning. C’mon sweetie, why don’t you stay the night? Let me show you to the spare room.

ALEXIS: You’re right, Mrs. Shaw, I can’t really drive all the way to Lexington tonight. But, just for tonight.

BETH: And leave me alone for Billy’s triumphant return? Ahhhh, you told me you’re off until Wednesday. You can stay here tomorrow. And maybe you and your father will have calmed down a bit by then. Until then, you stay here. Let me show you our spare room.

ALEXIS (smiling through her tears): All right. I don’t think I’ll change my mind about my father, but it would be nice to see Steven again before I leave.

(BETH leads ALEXIS off left. As they are leaving PERKINS comes to the door of the SHAW kitchen and SOUND CUE: knocks on the door.)

BETH (as she is moving from the left): Yes, who is it? (She arrives at the door and sees who it is). May I help you, Mr. Perkins?

PERKINS: Yes, Mrs. Shaw. I came to see if my daughter is here.

BETH: Yes, Mr. Perkins. She is here, but you have upset her and I will not force her to see you if she doesn’t care to.

PERKINS (with anger in his voice): Now you see here. She is my daughter and I will do with her as I wish and no – ballplayer’s wife – is going to stop me!

BETH: I’m sorry, Mr. Perkins, but Alexis is an adult now and she WILL do as she pleases.

PERKINS is obviously about to lose control when ALEXIS enters left.

ALEXIS: Daddy.

PERKINS: Alexis, I want you to gather whatever things you may have here and you are to come home with me.
ALEXIS: No father, I will not. I cannot stay with you when you are like this. I don’t know what is going on with you, but until we can have a reasonable discussion, I see no reason why we should even be in the same room.

PERKINS: You are going to defy me – for a ballplayer!

ALEXIS: I am not defying you. I am an adult now, and I’m following my own path. Daddy, I love Steven with all my heart and if you would give him a chance, you would feel the same way. I don’t want to live my life estranged from you. You are my father and you raised me and I love you and always will. But I can’t stay with you when you are like this!

PERKINS takes a step inside of the SHAW kitchen and attempts to grab ALEXIS’s arm. ALEXIS steps back and BETH steps in between them.

BETH: Mr. Perkins, this is my house and you are not welcome here. If you don’t leave this minute, I’ll call the police and let them handle this matter.

PERKINS attempts to say something, fails, and with a glaring look at the two women, turns and exits right. As soon as PERKINS leaves, ALEXIS breaks down and weeps on BETH’s shoulder.

BETH: Come on over to the table and sit down. The game’s on. We can listen to Steven and find out how he’ll lead the Colonels on to victory.

**SOUND CUE: ballgame off**

The ANNOUNCER’s voice becomes louder so it is clear now.

ANNOUNCER: Wilson looks in for the sign. The lanky right-hander winds and delivers the two – two pitch. Steven Shaw turns the fastball around and lines it into the gap in left-center field. It bounds all of the way to the wall and Hall and Buckner are going to score. Shaw ends up at second with a stand-up double and the Colonels lead 2 to nothing.

**SOUND CUE: ballgame very low**

BETH: That’s my boy!

ALEXIS: And my father said he wouldn’t amount to anything!
BETH: Your father said that! Ohhhh, it’s one thing for him to get on Billy, but now he’s on Steven. I have no idea of what’s going on here! Alexis, you can stay here as long as you like!

ALEXIS: Mrs. Shaw, I have to get to work. I can’t stay after tomorrow night.

BETH: Yes, yes, you’re right. I just got all worked up.

The two women pantomime chatting and listening to the radio. The ballplayers on the field pantomime winning the game. SOUND CUE: ballgame fades out. Lights dim down left and come up down right. POP and HENDERSON enter POP’s office from upstage.

HENDERSON (smiling from ear to ear): Well, Pop, the Pirates lost to the Cards tonight and with our win, we’re in first. Looks like your idea of bringing up Steven was the right move.

POP (equally pleased and settling back into the desk chair): Yea, the boy’s quite a ballplayer. Takes right after his old man.

HENDERSON: That’s what I’m here to talk to you about. The GM thinks that when we activate Billy, we should release him and eat the rest of his contract rather than sending one of the other boys down. After all, they got themselves into first place without him.

POP (jumping to his feet): Now you just hold on for a moment! Don’t you forget that Billy Shaw has played for the Colonels for 30 years! That’s 30 years! The next guy we have who played for the Colonels played what twelve – thirteen years. Billy Shaw gave his life to this franchise! We finished first our share of times and second or third a pile more, and I’ll tell you what – it’s because of Billy Shaw! Don’t you think we owe it to Billy Shaw to let him play on one more pennant winner and finish his career having gone to the World Series? That man has packed this house when we didn’t deserve to draw a dozen! And you’re worried about some bad press from Perkins. Give me a break. I’ll tell you what, if you release Billy Shaw, you’ll also have to release this manager because I won’t manage this team without him!

HENDERSON: Okay, Pop. We’ll play it your way. You were right about Steven when the front office wanted to bring up Johannsen. I’ll stand behind you no matter what. I don’t care about the Louisville Press, you’re my man on the field for as long as I own this team.
HENDERSON exits through the door to POP’s office and then exits up right. POP sits in his chair and begins to do some paper work. Lights dim down right and come up down left. BILLY and STEVEN leave the celebration on the field and cross to the kitchen.

BETH: Billy! Steven! You guys are in first place! (She hugs STEVEN and gives him a peck on the cheek and then repeats this with BILLY.

STEVEN moves to the table and sits next to ALEXIS

STEVEN: You bet, mom.

BETH: And tomorrow you and your dad get to play on the same field again. Oh, this takes me so far back in time.

BILLY: You know it, mother. (BILLY crosses to STEVEN and puts his hand on STEVEN’s shoulder.) It’ll be just like old times. (It is obvious that BILLY is moved.)

Lights dim down left and come up down right. BILLY and STEVEN exit to the ball field.

POP is still sitting in his office chair when PERKINS comes in without knocking.

POP (looking up): Oh, it’s you.

PERKINS: Yes, it’s me. Well, Billy Shaw’s off the DL tonight. What’re you goin’ to do? Let him ride the bench? You know he’s washed up and can’t help the team. You’re in first place and he wasn’t there. The rest of the boys did it without him. Where was the team when Billy Shaw was in the lineup?

POP gets up and walks around his desk to confront PERKINS.

POP: Not that it’s any business of yours, but Billy Shaw’ll be batting fourth right behind Steven and Billy Shaw is far from washed up. If you could write half as well as he can play ball, you’d be winning the Pulitzer.

PERKINS: What! Steven Shaw’s been batting fourth throughout this hot streak and you’re goin’ to move him!

POP: You bet! And I’ll tell you what! You write your trash in the newspaper and I’ll run this ball club. It’s what we both know how to do the best! Now, I want you to walk
through that door and get out of my sight because if you don’t, I’ll not only throw you out, but I’ll grab you by the collar and throw your butt through that wall.

PERKINS: Pop, I’m only trying to do my . . . .

POP: GET!!!!!!!!

PERKINS shrugs and turns and leaves and goes to the grandstand and sits there. POP goes back to his desk, writes for a few moments and then exits to the ballfield and sits on the bench. Ballplayers are already out warming up and spectators are in the stands. ALEXIS and BETH are already tuning in the radio. Lights dim down right and come up upstage.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low for about 15-30 seconds and then off.

ANNOUNCER: Another magnificent night for baseball. The sky is clear, the air is warm, and excitement fills the park for the fans who are here to watch their first place Louisville Colonels take on the Giants here at Henderson Field. We have word tonight that Billy Shaw will be back. Ah, here’s the line-up card. Humm, yes, Billy’s batting fourth, right behind his son Steven. That’s a bit of a surprise. Steven’s been tearing the cover off of the ball in the fourth slot, but Pop’s been around this game a long time, I bet he knows what he’s doing. Let’s cut for a station break and then we’ll back for the Heinz 57 line-ups for tonight’s game.

POP: Okay, Billy. Ah, man, am I glad you’re back. It was like I had one hand tied behind my back all this time.

BILLY: Pop, you can’t imagine how glad I am to be back. I belong here. This is exactly where I belong and nowhere else.

ANNOUNCER: With two out, Steven Shaw stands in. Steven is moving up in the statistical ranks in the league as he picks up at bats. He’s fifth right now in homeruns, third in RBIs, and is moving into the top ten in steals. And all of this missing the first third of the season because he was in the minors at Lexington. The pitch sails outside. The word around the league is to work Steven outside and then come in on his fists. The only problem is that it hasn’t been working. And the next is high and inside. Steven has such quick wrists that he can get around on anything inside. They had better be careful. Another pitch way outside. They don’t seem to want to give Steven anything to hit. Maybe wise, Billy Shaw’s timing has to be at least a little bit off. And there’s ball four with a pitch in the dirt. And here comes Billy Shaw. A runner on first and two out here in the bottom of the first. Wills winds and delivers . . . and there’s a high drive deep to
left, it’s going, going, open the bedroom window, Aunt Minnie, ‘cause here it comes! Billy Shaw is back!!!

The lights stay up upstage, but BETH and ALEXIS are celebrating in the SHAW kitchen.

SOUND CUE: ballgame very low.

SPECTATOR #2: Way to go, Billy. We missed you!

SPECTATOR #1: Nobody can stop us now, we got the Shaw boys!

SPECATOR #4: (Looking at SPECTATOR #5) We told them all along, but they had to pay attention to that piranha Perkins.

STEVEN is waiting for BILLY at home plate as BILLY come in to score. STEVEN throws his arm over BILLY’S shoulder and BILLY does the same and the two of them head for the bench where other ballplayers congratulate BILLY.

POP: Way to go, Billy! Man, we are going to ride your back all the way to the pennant!

STEVEN: I think you hit that ball clear to Pittsburgh. The fans know what’s happening. You drove me in, dad. Just like we dreamed in the backyard.

BILLY walks behind STEVEN on the bench and puts his hands on STEVEN’s shoulders. It is obvious that he has become too emotional to speak. This is what he has dreamed of.

Lights dim upstage and come up down left. The ANNOUNCER is still announcing the game, but it isn’t loud enough to hear.

ALEXIS: Mrs. Shaw, it’s happened! This is almost like a movie. I can’t believe it!

BETH (almost on the verge of tears): This is more than I can believe myself. You know that Billy has hung on for the last few years just to have this moment, don’t you?

ALEXIS: Yes, I figured. This season will be magical.

Lights dim down left and come up upstage. Players have been playing on the field all during the scene in the kitchen.

SOUND CUE: ballgame off.
ANNOUNCER: Well, we have a ballgame. The Colonels have been stymied by Wills ever since that homerun by Billy Shaw in the first. But we have the top of the order up with two outs and the score two to one. Maybe we can make some noise and get the Shaws to bat. Wills looks in at Thomas and delivers, a fastball inside. It drove Thomas off the plate. Wills has been wild inside over the whole ball game. He’s just been able to hold it together enough to keep it close. If our boys are patient, they might be able to work him to lay one out over the plate. There’s ball two. The pitch was again inside. Thomas waits and lines a base hit out over second base into center field. We have a man on with two out here in the seventh. That brings up lefty hitting Carter. With two outs, Pop Jackson is limited with what he can do. I guess at this point, all he can do is play station to station baseball. Carter lines a base hit into the gap. It bounces up against the wall. It looks like Thomas got a late break on the pitch and all he could do is get to third. Well, we have runners on second and third and Steven Shaw is going to step in. Aw, they’re going to walk him intentionally. Ball three, ball four. Quite a strategy with Billy Shaw coming to the plate, but I guess the Giants figure with the game this close they have to pick their poison. Wills looks around at the runners leading off of their respective bases and he steps off. The catcher will run through the signs again and Wills looks in. He winds and delivers, it’s a fastball high and inside. Billy ducks out of the way. Brother, is Wills wild tonight. Billy looks down at the third base coach. I don’t know why, there can’t be a play on. Wills steps up on the rubber and peers in for the sign. Now he steps back off and grabs the rosin bag, bounces it in his hand for a moment and then lets it drop into the dirt. He obviously doesn’t really want to pitch to Billy Shaw. He probably is psyching himself up to make the perfect pitch. Alright, he’s back up on the mound. Billy Shaw digs in. Wills winds and delivers. Oh No, the pitch sails high and inside and hits Billy Shaw. He’s down. It looked like it hit him right in the forehead, just under the bill of the cap.

ALEXIS and BETH in the kitchen react strongly.

BETH: Oh, Billy

ALEXIS: Oh, Mrs. Shaw. Oh, Stephen

(ALEXIS exits the kitchen)

ANNOUNCER: Billy Shaw isn’t moving. He’s just laying there in the dust. This looks so bad, just when he came back.

Ballplayers are helping BILLY exit up right. BILLY is obviously unresponsive. Fans are reacting as expected.
Lights dim upstage and come up down right. Ballplayers and spectators are slowly exiting the stage both up right and up left. POP moves to his office. PERKINS follows. BETH sits in the SHAW kitchen with her face in her hands. The TRAINER enters the office.

TRAINER: Billy Shaw is dead. (He tries to add to this, but simply can’t. He turns and exits POP’s office and moves to the ball field where he stops and comforts STEVEN who is still sitting on the bench.

POP and PERKINS pause a moment and look at each other and then POP looks away and moves to his desk chair.

PERKINS: Well, that ends an era.

POP merely looks at PERKINS.

PERKINS: An era that should have been ended long ago.

POP is obviously biting his tongue.

PERKINS: Don’t you have anything to say? Your star is now where he should have been years ago. Up there with all of the other washed up ballplayers.

POP (unable to remain silent): No you fool. Billy Shaw was a ballplayer. Probably the greatest ballplayer anyone will ever see. He brought a dignity to this game that we’ll never be able to regain. He would have batted fourth on my team until he was ninety if he wanted to. People like you make me sick. You’re never happy until you sully all that is pure and decent and putrefy everything with the bile you spew out with every word you write. Billy Shaw made baseball and we are all better for it.

PERKINS: You are so blind. You’ll never see things as they really are. Baseball is nothing. You are nothing. Billy Shaw is nothing.

POP (Quietly): Leave. Please just leave. I just saw the greatest MAN any of us will ever see struck down and I just can’t listen anymore.

POP using the same words as ALEXIS strikes PERKINS and he leaves.

As PERKINS leaves POP’s office, the TRAINER exits up right and STEVEN enters POP’s office.
POP: You heard?

STEVEN: Yeah

POP: I don’t what to say, Steven. I know it’s killing me inside. Billy was one of the shining lights in my life. He made baseball so wonderful. I’m sorry, I can only imagine how you feel and here I am only worrying about myself. You know, if you need to leave the club for a few days, it’s okay with me. I’ll make it fly with Mr. Henderson.

(ALEXIS enters and takes STEVEN’s arm)

STEVEN: No, Pop, I can’t. My dad stayed with it to the end. As long as he could still get on the field, he was there.

POP: You know, Steven, sometimes if a man holds onto his dreams too long – too hard – those dreams’ll kill him. You know, the world is like that. Those people who won’t bend, the world’ll kill.

STEVEN: I tried to be just myself for so long and not just be Billy Shaw’s son. I just didn’t understand the legacy he left for me. I am Billy Shaw’s son and I will be forever. All I can do is try to live up to the model he left for me. In every way, as a ballplayer and as a man. I always loved my dad, but now I understand who he really was. He was always so gentle, so caring, but above all, so passionate. It’s the memory of that passion that will carry me and will carry me to the heights I can’t even dream of now. Billy Shaw’s legacy is something of value and it’s up to all those who care, like you, Pop, to protect it and be certain that it is cherished the way it should be by ball fans forever. But you know what, Pop, it’s up to me more than anyone. I need to make sure that Billy Shaw is never forgotten.